UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES SERIES

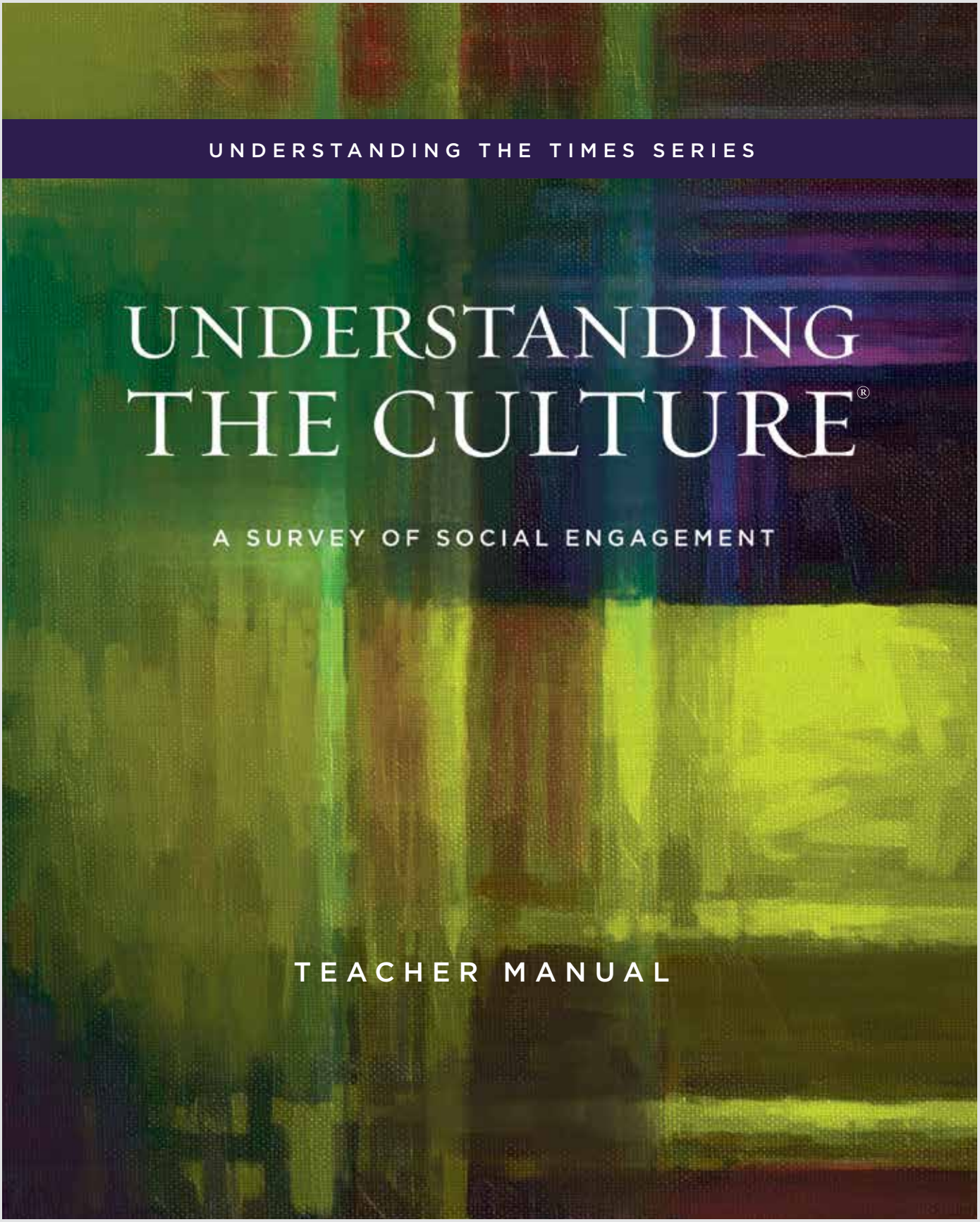
UNDERSTANDING THE CULTURE®

A SURVEY OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

SAMPLER

UNIT 1

TEACHER MANUAL | STUDENT MANUAL | TEXTBOOK



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Using Understanding the Culture Curriculum

Course Overview

Culture happens when humans interact with the natural world. Everyone participates in culture, and some people even help create or change it. *Understanding the Culture* is a guidebook for learning what culture is and how Christians can work to influence it for the better.

Despite stunning advances in technology and medicine, most people think our culture has gotten worse. But should Christians have anything to do with trying to fix it? Haven't so many culture-change efforts ended badly? Won't there always be legitimate disagreements?

It is a daunting task to apply a biblical worldview to the challenges of our times, but *Understanding the Culture* effectively does so by helping students understand:

- What culture is, how it is made, and how Christians in the past have shaped it.
- What biblical principles look like applied to tough issues such as technology, amusement, abortion, euthanasia, bio-ethics, same-sex attraction, feminism, marriage, politics, creation care, poverty, community development, diversity, justice, and the use of force.
- How we can become cultural change agents.

Understanding the Culture also outlines in great detail how Christians in the past have positively influenced nearly every aspect of Western culture, and other cultures around the world. Now it's our turn. This hands-on manual will equip Christians to heal a broken world and restore God's original design for culture.

Curriculum Sections

Before beginning this curriculum, it will be helpful to understand its structure and components.

1. **Syllabus:** What occurs each day and when assignments are due.

   [The standard schedule for this course assumes your class meets 5 days per week for 36 weeks. However, the following alternative schedules can be found online:

   - *5 days per week for 36 weeks*
   - *4 days per week for 36 weeks*
   - *3 days per week for 36 weeks*
   - *2 days per week for 36 weeks*
   - *1 day per week for 36 weeks*
   - *5 days per week for 18 weeks*
   - *4 days per week for 18 weeks*
   - *3 days per week for 18 weeks*
   - *2 days per week for 18 weeks*
   - *1 day per week for 18 weeks]*

2. **Objectives:** Main learning goals for each chapter.

3. **Chapter Discussion Questions:** A review of the material read in each chapter.

4. **Classroom Activities:** Activities designed to reinforce content from each chapter.

5. **Readings:** Primary source materials, sometimes from non-Christian sources.

6. **Reading Discussion Questions:** A review of the material from the primary source readings.

7. **Reading Quizzes:** Multiple-choice and true/false questions for each primary source reading.

   [*Student copies can be found online. Website and passcode are at the back of this manual.*]

8. **Videos:** Lectures from experts, which dive deeper into key subjects.

9. **Video Outlines:** Notes from each video.

10. **Video Discussion Questions:** A review of the material covered in each video.

11. **Video Quizzes:** Multiple-choice and true/false questions for each video.

    [*Student copies can be found online. Website and passcode are at the back of this manual.*]

12. **Key Points:** Includes key questions, terms, verses, players, and works from each chapter reading.

13. **Writing Assignments:** Essay questions to answer at the end of each chapter.

14. **Tests:** A mixture of questions (matching, multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay) taken from each chapter's content.

    [*Student copies can be found online. Website and passcode are at the back of this manual.*]

Wheatstone Training Videos

Summit has partnered with Wheatstone Ministries to provide you with training on how to lead a fruitful conversation in class. Visit summit.org/wheatstone and use the code SMWS1617 to access these short videos.

Reflect

A weekly blog that connects the worldviews and ideas you are discussing in class with pop culture illustrations. We've also included helpful resources for further enrichment in each post. Visit summit.org/reflect-signup to sign up for notifications or summit.org/reflect-archive to access current entries.

College Credit

If you are interested in learning more about college credit for this course, please take visit summit.org/college-credit for more information.

Summit Alumni Network

This is a fabric of Christian thinkers and doers woven together by Summit Ministries' conference and curriculum grads. We gather—online and in-person—for ongoing study, strengthening community, and serving the cities in which we live. Join the network at summit.org/alumni.

Teaching Understanding the Culture Curriculum

Course Overview

Understanding the Culture is an introduction to Christian social engagement, designed as a sequel to Understanding the Times (though it works great as a stand-alone course). By the end of the course, students will understand the various approaches that Christians have used in the past to engage culture and will have a clear path forward to begin making a difference in their communities.

The textbook is divided according to the pattern below:

1. **Introduction**
   - Chapter 1: Introduction
2. **A History of Culture and an Action Plan**
   - Chapter 2: What is Culture?
   - Chapter 3: Christianity and Culture: A History
   - Chapter 4: Christianity and Culture: A Plan
   - Chapter 5: Thinking and Speaking Clearly
3. **Engaging in Social Challenges**
   - Chapter 6: Technology
   - Chapter 7: The Arts and Entertainment
   - Chapter 8: The Value of Human Life
   - Chapter 9: Sexuality
   - Chapter 10: Marriage
   - Chapter 11: Creation Care
   - Chapter 12: Politics
   - Chapter 13: Religious Freedom and Persecution
   - Chapter 14: Poverty Care, Poverty Cure
   - Chapter 15: The Use of Force
   - Chapter 16: Justice
   - Chapter 17: Community Renewal
4. **Comprehensive Review**
   - Chapter 18: Conclusion

A History of Culture and an Action Plan

Many people want to change the world. We want our lives to count. A crucial idea for this course is recognizing that before we can make a difference, we need to understand what culture is, how people have dealt with it in the past, and what models we can use for making a difference. If we don't grasp these foundational chapters, it will be all too easy to jump into a particular social issue without actually doing any good—or worse, causing harm.

The Understanding the Times series explores in part the importance of the life of the mind. Christians need to think. And that applies when it comes to practical actions steps, not just theory. This section gives you a good opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of Christian social engagement, the pitfalls people have fallen into in the past, and practical principles for social engagement we can practice daily. Students will be excited to get to the social issues, but be sure not to rush through these chapters as they lay the groundwork on which the remainder of the textbook is built.

Engaging in Social Challenges

The remaining portion of the textbook examines 12 social issues including everything from technology and entertainment to sexuality and poverty. Each chapter follows a four-point pattern.

First, Dr. Myers introduces a particular social challenge. We then identify what the problem is and what specifically makes the issue a challenge. Next, we will look at why Christians should care about that distinct issue. Occasionally, we will identify the destructive tendencies of counterfeit worldviews. If you have previously completed Understanding the Times with students, some of the material will cross over and this will be a good opportunity to deepen the worldview discussions.

The final portion of each chapter will examine the question, "What should Christians do?" We don't want students to leave with a head full of knowledge without any practical application. Dr. Myers will suggest practical principles that we can apply as we seek to engage each social challenge. As a teacher, it would be great to think of ways that you can have your students practice engagement in each of the 12 issues. Examples might be having the students take a fast from technology for a week (technology chapter) or writing letters to state senators (politics chapter). This is key. Give students the opportunity to practice what they are reading.

Two final notes to make here: first, changing the world is a big, exciting goal. But if we start there, we will probably become overwhelmed and give up on changing things all together. If we are going to make a difference, we have to start small. We need to start in our own neighborhoods and communities. Secondly, we need to keep in mind that the goal is not for Christians to take over culture. The goal is to live out our calling as image bearers of God.

Course Structure

Understanding the Cuklture can be used effectively over a one- or two-semester period. The course will look a little different depending on which syllabus you choose, so we suggest reading over this content before selecting your syllabus.

In the traditional classroom model, the teacher lectures during class time and students complete outside work at home. In this course, the idea is for students to read the textbook, watch lectures, and read other sources prior to class time. When students come to class, they will discuss those ideas in the context of relationship under the guidance of a teacher. It is in this sense that we have "flipped" the classroom.

Two-Semester (180-Day) Course

Because content flows through relationships, we structure the course so that there is adequate space for both meaningful relationships and meaningful content. There are 18 chapters in the textbook, and we allocate 2 weeks per chapter.

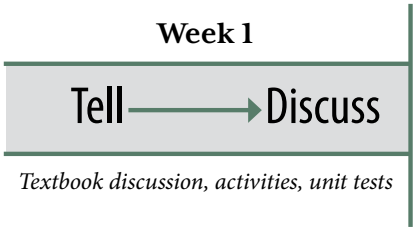
To make this happen, we offer a "tell and show" model. The first week, we tell the students about the patterns of ideas and their consequences; the second week, we show them where these ideas are being discussed and practiced in the real world.

Week 1	Week 2
Tell → Discuss	Show → Discuss
Textbook discussion and activities	*Lecture videos, primary source readings, quizzes, Dear Doug essays, unit tests*

We don't want students to believe what we're saying simply because we're saying it. We want students to hear claims being made by the textbook and then see those ideas played out in real life. The first week is spent in the textbook and the second week is spent looking at "outside materials," that is, non-textbook readings and videos that cover the same themes as the textbook. Usually these outside materials consist of primary source readings, videos from other worldview perspectives, and video lectures. Each outside reading and video will have accompanying discussion questions to help students evaluate what they have just read or watched. At the end of the second week, students will turn in a Dear Doug essay and take a unit test.

One Semester (90-Day) Course

The one-semester (90-day) course is going to look a little different from the two-semester course. Because we have half the time, this schedule will cover only the textbook reading (or "tell" side) of the curriculum. As such, we will not be allotting time for extra outside readings or videos. To keep the students from having to test every week, we recommend administering two tests every two weeks.



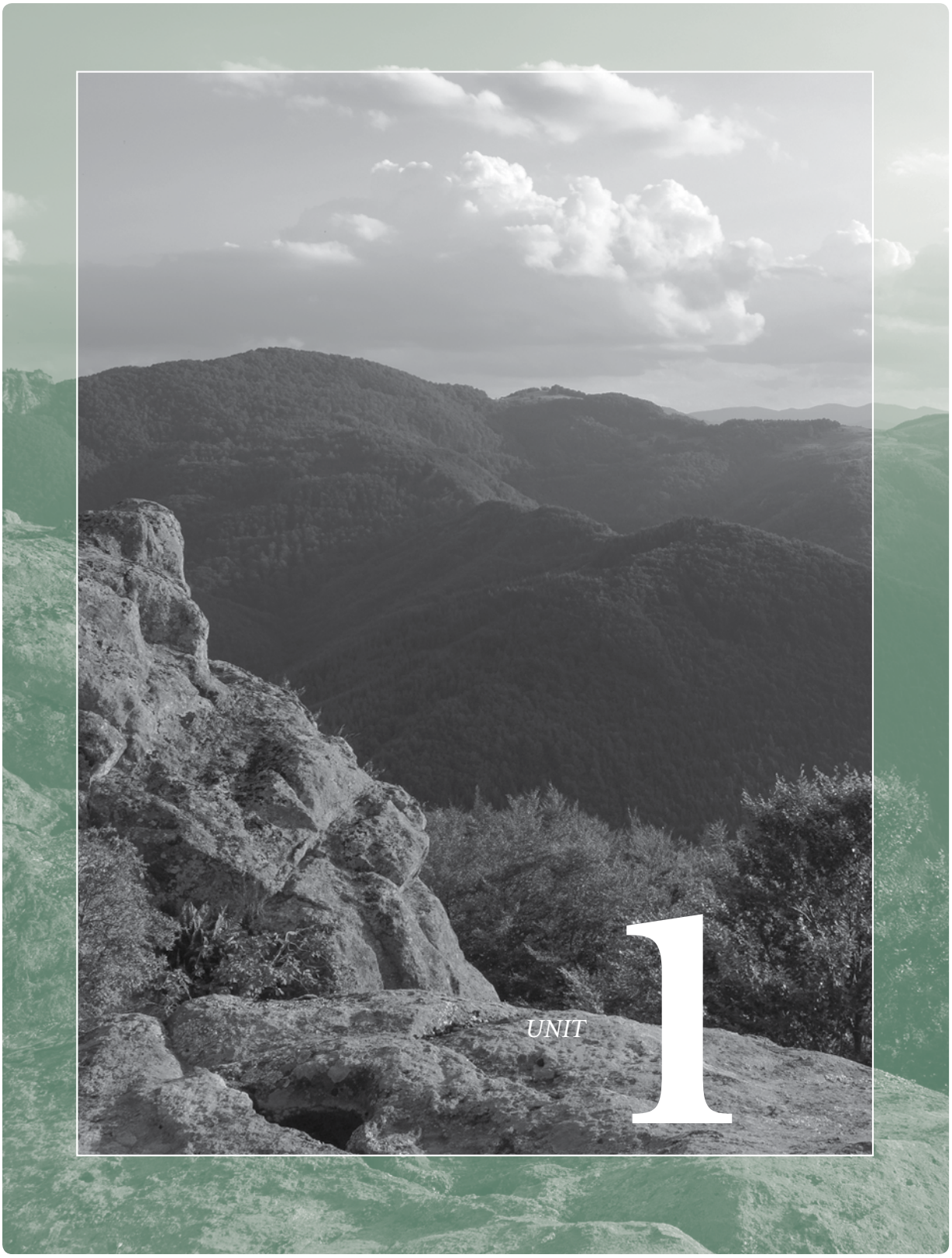
Assessments and Grading

Every school and teacher has a different grading system. Since this is your course, we want you to do whatever works best for you. We have included a grading scale below to give you an idea of how to get started. Please note that it is only a suggestion. If it doesn't work for you, don't feel the need to use it.

- **Participation:** You may want to give your students some form of incentive for participating in class discussion. (Note: This does not apply to the homeschool version since it is self-paced).
- **Quizzes:** We have included 5-question quizzes for every outside reading and video lecture. The quizzes are true/false or multiple choice.
- **Unit Tests:** At the end of every chapter, students will take a test. The tests are a mix of question styles (Matching, multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, and short answer).
- **Dear Doug Essays:** At the end of every chapter, students will write a letter/essay to a fictional college student named Doug. Usually, his letters will contain four specific questions for the students to answer.

- **Final Exam:** The final exam consists of 100 mixed style questions (Multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank). Since chapter 18 is a comprehensive review, this will also be the unit test for that chapter.

Assessment	% of Grade
Participation	10%
Quizzes	15%
Unit Tests	35%
Essays	35%
Final Exam	5%
TOTAL	**100%**


UNIT
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INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. recognize the importance of Christians to properly care about the world around us. [1.1]
2. recognize the consequences our ideas should have on our actions, and discuss the influence of our decisions on the world around us. [1.2]
3. identify the impact our concept of "the big picture" has on our caring for the world around us. [1.3]
4. discuss the implications of living in a universe that we can observe and how that demonstrates God's concern for humanity. [1.4]
5. explain how our answers to metaphysical questions, addressing both the positive and negative aspects of human progress, often lead to cultural conflict. [1.5]
6. analyze the culture conflict in America between liberal and fundamentalist movements in the early twentieth century. [1.6]
7. discuss the responses of Christian conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century to cultural changes. [1.7]
8. identify the multiple reasons why Christian conservatism as a cultural movement began to fracture by the end of the twentieth century. [1.8]
9. identify and discuss the biblical reasons for Christians to concern themselves with the culture around us. [1.9]
10. identify and discuss the biblical directives for the attributes Christians ought to pursue when engaging with the culture. [1.10]

Chapter 1 Discussion Questions

1. **What is the overall purpose of this book? [1:1]**

   In this book, we turn our attention to the needs of the world around us and ask whether what the Bible says actually matters and what we ought to do about it. This book is an invitation to stop playing God and to start engaging the world around us based on God's intended design for it and for us.

   We all live based on what we believe to be true. Christians must act on biblical ideas, not just in our personal conduct, but also in the big issues of our day such as life, marriage, military force, the economy, and justice. The question is, are biblical ideas still relevant? Can we, or should we, apply the Bible's teachings at a cultural level? Should we try to shape culture? The answer is yes, and this book aims to help us do so.

Chapter 1.2 Activity

Caring Starts with Good Decisions

Objective: Students will record a good decision they made and discuss how far reaching the influence of that decision could have on the world around them.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: index cards
- Time Required: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Discuss how far reaching the decision to come to this class and study the *Understanding the Culture* textbook could be on each teen and their sphere of influence.
2. Distribute index cards to each student. On the front of the card have each student write down one good decision he/she made this week.
3. Have students find a partner and read each other's good decision. Together have the pair brainstorm ideas about how far reaching the results of the good decision could possibly be to positively affect more people. On the back of the card have students write the steps showing how far reaching the decision was.
4. Have each pair gather with another pair and share the possible ends of each good decision. Allow time for more brainstorming to see if the group can think of possible ways the decision reaches even further.
5. Gather the class together and invite volunteers to share their possible results to their good decision. Discuss how much possible, positive impact can be made by each student and collectively by the class.

2. How has technology enabled us to make better decisions? [1:2]

Technologies such as the printing press, computers, and smartphones have changed the world and continue to do so. From Gutenberg's adaptation of a winepress into a printing press to the latest microchip embedded in our credit cards, technology extends power to those who would have little power at all without it.

People now use handheld devices to exchange money, run businesses, and even deploy social media in revolt against undemocratic regimes and police brutality. A world of information and opinion is at our fingertips, but information alone doesn't make for better decisions.

Chapter 1.3 Activity

Christian Caring Starts with Seeing the Big Picture

Objective: Students will make two timelines to compare the impact "the big picture" has on how people care for the world around them.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: computer or paper and pencil
- Time Required: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Discuss the question, "What do you think the big picture is which makes all the difference in the world?"
2. Arrange students in small groups. Have each group spend about 5 minutes to create a timeline to show the effects of a high school student who chooses to believe the most important thing is to travel into space. Challenge each group to build the timeline in 5-year increments for the next 50 years. Each increment should detail decisions and actions an individual would take to move towards accomplishing the big picture.
3. Then have groups make another timeline showing the decisions and actions reflecting a high school student with a big picture of seeing God worshiped by every tongue and tribe on the earth.
4. Have the class join together and discuss the similarities and differences between the two timelines. Ask students which timeline they would like to follow and why. Ask students which timeline would help humanity the most and why.

3. **If you had to go a week without any access to information technology or social media, how would your life be different?**

   You wouldn't spend as much time in front of a screen. Your personal communication would be more direct and time-consuming. You would have to read paper books, magazines, and newspapers. There would be no virtual tours; you would have to be physically present to see and hear things. Shopping, banking, and movie watching would all have to be done in person.

   Would this be a change for the better—or the worse?

4. **What is the "anthropic principle?' [1:4]**

   '*Anthro*" means "pertaining to humanity." The **anthropic principle** holds that an intelligent force "fine-tuned" the universe to have the properties that make intelligent life inevitable. As Albert Einstein affirmed, "The harmony of natural law … reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."

   > The anthropic principle is the most interesting development next to the proof of the creation, and it is even more interesting because it seems to say that science itself has proven, as a hard fact, that this universe was made, was designed, for man to live in. It is a very theistic result." (Robert Jastrow)

   If these great scientists are right, then there is an intelligence behind the universe who designed it so that humanity can exist and flourish. We are not accidents; any view of the world that misunderstands the importance of human beings is missing the most important fact about our existence.

   To this scientific perspective can be added the biblical declaration that people are made in the image of God and are the focal point of his plan for creation.

5. **What is "metaphysics" and what questions does it seek to answer? [1:5]**

   In Greek, the word **metaphysics** means "beyond the natural things." Metaphysics has become the realm of philosophers and deals with the ultimate questions of reality. The main questions have to do with the following:

   - **Origin**: Where did we come from? Have we been made in God's image or are we the product of time and chance?
   - **Identity**: Who are we? What is a human being? Does every human being have intrinsic worth and dignity?
   - **Meaning**: What is real and true and how do we know? What is life all about? Is there purpose to our lives or must we contrive it somehow?

- **Morality**: How should we live? Are there rules for the good life? Who makes them? Are they true for all times and all cultures or do they depend on our circumstances?
- **Destiny**: What happens next? Where is history headed? Is there an afterlife? Should we try to fix the world or look to a life beyond this one?

The way people answer these questions, in their beliefs and behaviors, forms their **worldview**.

Chapter 1.5 Activity

Why We Should Care about What God Cares About

Objective: Students will write answers to metaphysical questions based on five different cultures and identify how those answers lead to cultural conflict.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: computer or paper and pencil
- Time Required: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into five groups and assign each group one of the five questions listed in the text.
2. Have each group write an answer for the question that would be based on how your school administration would likely respond. Then have them write an answer for the question that teens in different groups might respond to, such as Hispanic, Muslim, Asian, and European. Point out that different groups can have a culture, and it shapes how those within the group view the culture around them.
3. Have the class join together and discuss the differences in how groups would answer these questions. Guide students to look for similarities among the answers from different cultures and which cultures seemed to have the greatest conflict. Lead a discussion that points out the conflicts between cultures today can be found rooted in how these metaphysical questions are answered.

6. Does being a citizen of heaven mean we shouldn't get involved in the things of this world? [1.6]

There are some Christians who believe being citizens of heaven means not getting involved in this world. According to Shane Claiborne, "Jesus taught that his followers … should not attempt to 'run the world.'" This world cannot be redeemed and we shouldn't

try. The best we can do is form an alternate community so attractive to people in the world that they want to join it.

The famous nineteenth-century evangelist Dwight L. Moody said, "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'" Moody believed that the only thing worth doing was to ensure that people go to heaven when they die.

Contrast this with what Jesus said about being salt and light:

> You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13–16, NIV)

The Christian's hope is not in this world, but we still have a responsibility to steward God's creation, not abandon it.

7. What factors led to the creation of the Fundamentalist movement? [1:6]

At the turn of the twentieth century, America's greatest universities were torn from their Christian roots by liberal professors who denied orthodox Christianity in favor of Darwinian evolution, socialism, and communism. Many prominent pastors joined in promoting a "**social gospel**," including Walter Rauschenbusch, who published *Theology for the Social Gospel*, which defined sin as selfishness and implied that the kingdom of God would be brought about through good works that changed society.

Many Christians didn't accept this liberal approach, nor did they embrace the social gospel. Theology professors A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey set forth what they saw as the basic principles of Christianity in a series of twelve books entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth.* This publication was widely disseminated among Christian leaders and inspired a new movement, **Fundamentalism**, which George Marsden defines as "militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism."

8. What happened to the Fundamentalist movement? [1:6]

Fundamentalism started to unravel in the 1930s due to relentless attacks in the culture and infighting. The sense of fierce theological independence that gave fundamentalism its start made it difficult for its leaders to compromise and form a cohesive movement.

Many of the movement's leaders embraced the idea that he end of the world was imminent and that the Antichrist would soon appear, followed by the return of Christ himself. With the impending end of the world in mind, compromise and cooperation were seen as misguided forms of unity, derisively calling this unit "**ecumenism**." Many fundamentalists chose to leave such churches and to "be separate from them" (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Chapter 1.6 Activity

Controversy: Fundamentalism Versus Liberalism

Objective: Students will write three truths and one lie about social gospel and fundamentalism to help define the culture conflict in America between liberal and fundamentalist movements in the early twentieth century.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: computer or paper and pencil
- Time Required: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into pairs. Direct each pair to work together to understand the terms, *social gospel and fundamentalism*, and then to write three truths and one false statement about each term.
2. When everyone has finished, direct the pairs to join with another pair and to read their statements. Have the pairs work together to identify the false statement for each term.
3. After the pairs have finished identifying the other pair's false statements, gather the group together. Ask how these conflicts within the culture of American Christianity might have affected the spread of Christianity in America in the early twentieth century.

9. What are some issues over which Christians should leave their churches? What are some issues where disagreement doesn't necessarily call for breaking fellowship?

The core doctrines of Christianity are nonnegotiable. If a church doesn't hold to the orthodox teaching on doctrines like the deity of Christ or salvation, it's probably best to move on.

There are other vital doctrinal issues upon which Christians have always disagreed, e.g., the age of the earth, the sequence of end times events, and predestination. Uniformity on these issues shouldn't be required for worship or fellowship.

Then there are social issues that are important but may not be grounds for separation, e.g., the role of women in the church, gun control, and politics.

[*As a follow up question, ask students what specific beliefs or practices would cause* them *to leave their local church. Where do they draw the line between major and minor doctrine?*]

10. Who are the New Evangelicals? [1:7]

The conflicts between liberalism and fundamentalism created a new movement of Protestants who claimed a born-again experience, believed the Bible was true, and were involved in like-minded churches. In the 1950s, leaders who wanted to see orthodox Christianity more effectively engage the culture formed the National Association of Evangelicals. They held to conservative positions on the truth of Scripture and were strongly critical of liberal theology and **Secularism**.

The New Evangelicals have become America's largest religious movement, constituting perhaps 35 to 45 percent of the United States population.

11. How did the New Evangelicals impact American culture? [1:7]

The Vietnam War, the sexual revolution, and the drugs and rebellion of the 1960s and 1970s shifted American culture from its Christian foundations. In the wake of the Nixon years and the Watergate scandal, an evangelical was elected president. Jimmy Carter's approach to economic issues seemed to make things worse. The Carter administration also formed the Department of Education, which immediately began taking steps many evangelicals felt were threatening toward the freedom of parents to educate their children in Christian schools.

Pastor Jerry Falwell started an organization called the **Moral Majority**. Along with similar groups, it helped elect Ronald Reagan. His popularity enabled conservatives to enact many parts of their agenda, primarily the lowering of the federal tax rate and the strengthening of foreign policy. The effect was dramatic: lower unemployment, lower inflation, and higher economic growth.

12. Which group do you most identify with: Fundamentalists, Liberals, New Evangelicals, or something else? [1.7]

What factors cause you to favor this group? What are its greatest strengths? What are its greatest weaknesses?

13. What factors caused Evangelicalism to splinter in the early twenty-first century? [1:8]

First, the evangelical movement was seen as too political. This opinion was influenced by **two-kingdoms theology**, which holds that the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of man represent the church and the world, and that the Bible's teachings are only relevant to the life of the church, not to civil government.

The second factor was disenchantment among the younger generation. Of those who regularly attended youth group as teens, only about 30 percent continued regular church attendance as twentysomethings.

Third, the teaching of Gnosticism reemerged. In this view, what we do in this world is really irrelevant because ultimate reality is spiritual.

Whether it is because of embarrassment at Christian political involvement, theological shallowness, or a sense that what we do in the physical world doesn't matter, many believe evangelical Christianity is declining in both popularity and influence.

Chapter 1.8 Activity

The End of Christian Conservatism as a Mass Movement

Objective: Students will find video clips and quotes from online sources about the founding of Christian conservatism, the height of the movement, and the decline of Christian conservatism.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: computer
- Time Required: 40–50 minutes

Procedure:

1. Divide the class into three groups and assign one of these topics to each group: the founding of Christian conservatism, the height of the movement, and the decline of Christian conservatism. Determine and announce the allotted time for each group to research and find a short video clip and/or quotes from credible online sources that give a brief overview of the assigned aspect of Christian conservatism. Encourage students to assign group members a specific task of research, compiling the info, and presenting the info to the group.
2. After the allotted time for research, invite the group that researched the founding of Christian conservatism to present first, followed by the group that focused on the height of the movement, and finally, the group that analyzed the decline of Christian conservatism.
3. Lead a discussion about how Christian conservatism affected the last election.
4. If time allows, invite students to share examples of how Christian conservatism could help and/or harm current social, political, or international issues.

14. What is "the third way" suggested by this book between Secularism and Gnosticism? [1:8]

The secular worldview holds that the physical world is good and the spiritual world is irrelevant. The Gnostic worldview believes the physical world is irrelevant because only the spiritual world is ultimately real. The "third way" is a biblical worldview that affirms both the physical world and spiritual reality. Both realms were created by God and originally pronounced "good."

The gospel does not deny or trivialize either the physical or spiritual aspects our humanity but offers its full restoration. As John Stonestreet says, "We are not saved from our humanness, but to it." The thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas put it this way: "Grace does not destroy nature, but completes it."

15. What are the main things God cares about? [1:9]

God cares about his glory: In the New Testament, the word for "glory" is the word *doxa,* which means "good reputation" or "honor." God's glory is so immense that all of nature proclaims it (Psalm 19:1). And according to Scripture, Jesus Christ is the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3). It is in and for his glory that Jesus Christ calls us and equips us for great things (2 Peter 1:3).

God cares that we bear his image: Humanity has been divinely created to bear the *imago Dei*, the "image of God" (Genesis 1:26–28). God's plan for human beings was, according to this passage, "very good."

God cares that we love our neighbors: Loving our neighbor is the unequivocal response to the reality that our neighbor is an image-bearer of God, Matthew 22:37–40. Our love for God will be evident by how we love our neighbors.

16. Is the command to love our neighbor strictly a New Testament concept or can it be found in the Old Testament? [1:9]

When Jesus emphasized the importance of loving our neighbors in Mark 12:30-31, he was drawing on a concept found in many Scriptures, including the Law of Moses. In Leviticus 19, God's people were told to love their neighbors, not because of who they are but because of who God is.

> When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God. … You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord. You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be

> partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. (Leviticus 19:9–10, 13–15)

The Israelites were to serve God by serving their neighbors in everything from agriculture to business contracts, to dealing with employees, to poverty care, to legal matters.

17. How does the biblical view of humanity differ from all other worldviews? [1:9]

From the very beginning, the Bible says that God made human beings in his image (Genesis 1:26–27). This image-bearing distinction is not found in any other worldview. It implies intrinsic value apart from our behavior, development, environment, or degree of dependency.

Humans are not just animals as materialistic and naturalistic worldviews insist. Nor are we purely spiritual beings with no vital connection to or responsibility for the physical world. We are God's children and stewards of his creation. If God cares enough about human beings to impart his image to each one of us, we should love and value one another.

[*As a follow up question, ask students how, exactly we bear God's image since he doesn't have a physical body?*]

18. What is narcissism and how is it affecting our culture? [1:9]

Narcissism is derived from a Greek myth about a boy named Narcissus who fell in love with his own reflection. He was so enamored with his own beauty that he lost the will to live. He stared at his reflection until he died. In their book, *The Narcissism Epidemic*, Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell lay the blame for the current epidemic of narcissism at the feet of endlessly repeated mantras, such as "You are special" and suggest that this blatant promotion of self-love has become pandemic among young adults.

Narcissism is a personal problem that morphs into a cultural problem that Twenge and Campbell say leads to vanity, materialism, uniqueness, antisocial behavior, relationship troubles, entitlement, and self-centered religion.

19. What is involved in pursuing a life of wisdom? [1:10]

Wisdom is central to the Bible's vision of human flourishing. The wisdom literature in Scripture—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon—reveal four distinct meanings of wisdom:

- skill in a craft
- intelligence and shrewdness
- good sense and moral understanding
- understanding the fundamental issues of life

In outlining how to live well, the wisdom literature assumes four things:

- The universe is ordered and life proceeds according to this order.
- This order is teachable and learnable.
- By learning the order in the universe, the individual can secure his/her way through life.
- The source and foundation of the order in the universe is God.

Chapter 1.10 Activity

How We Ought to Care

Objective: Students will give examples of how to combine Biblical reasons and attributes Christian ought to pursue related to current cultural topics.

Preparation:

- Materials Needed: computer or paper and pencil
- Time Required: 15 minutes

Procedure:

1. On the board write one or more current cultural topics, such as immigration or the definition of marriage. Make three different signs with one of the following Biblical reasons for Christians concerning themselves with the culture around them: God cares about His glory, God cares that we bear His image, and God cares that we love our neighbors. Place each sign in a different location of the room.
2. Divide the class into three groups and send each group to one of the three locations. Have each group make a list of ways they can use the three attributes of wisdom, worthiness, and words to align with the Biblical reasons for caring for the culture around them related to the cultural topics on the board.
3. Allow time for the groups to discuss and write down general and specific ways the Biblical reasons and attributes Christians are out to pursue will affect the topic.
4. When everyone has finished, gather the three groups together and allow time for each group to present. Then lead a discussion about how willing students would be to engage the culture in the presented ways.

20. What does it mean to live a worthy life? [1:10]

Scripture strongly encourages us to live worthy lives (Philippians 1:27; 4:8). The word "worthy" in Greek means "recognized as a fitting thing." A worthy life is one based on virtues such as prudence, charity, hope, and faith. The biblical approach to virtue is very different from the self-help psychologies that focus on happiness, health, and spiritual awareness, rather than how we can live to glorify God by loving our neighbor.

Christians believe the virtuous life is possible because God, through Christ, forgives our sins, heals our sinful human nature, and works to produce the fruit of the Spirit in us.

21. What role do words play in a caring life? [1:10]

Words can bring life or death (Proverbs 18:21; 25:11). As we speak the way God designed us to speak, we bear his image well. And when we do that, we can live with wisdom and show ourselves to be worthy in a way that blesses other people. We owe it to our fellow citizens to speak the truth as we understand it. Not to do so is to violate many scriptural commands, including these from Proverbs:

- Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. (Proverbs 3:27)
- Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. (Proverbs 31:8)
- Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. (Proverbs 24:11–12)

22. What are some key things you will learn in this book? [1:11]

- What culture is, how it is made, and how Christians in the past have shaped culture.
- How we can become shapers of culture.
- What it looks like when biblical principles are applied to the tough issues of our day.

These issues involve technology, amusement, abortion, euthanasia, bioethics, sexual issues, politics, creation care, poverty care, tolerance, diversity, liberty, justice, the use of force, and community development. This book will address these issues and more.

23. What factors determine if we go through life as "givers" or "takers"? [1:12]

With every action we either feed or starve the giver side or the taker side of our nature. If we feed the taker side, we will live miserably. We will not build anything of enduring value, nor leave others better off, nor rescue the perishing. But if we cultivate the giver side, we will do well and gain favor with God and man.

When it comes to facing difficult issues:

- Takers wilt quickly and slink away; givers take on challenges willingly.
- Takers tolerate people; givers shape them.
- Takers grow needier; givers become more generous.
- Takers fill their houses with junk; givers fill their lives with memories.

We develop into takers or givers through the countless choices we make every day.

"Culture Making" Part 1 Video

Andy Crouch notes the dysfunctional relationship between Christianity and culture in which both parties see each other at their worst. Christianity embraced a series of postures in the last hundred years that hasn't helped very much. Christians became known for condemning, critiquing, consuming, and copying culture instead of changing and creating it.

Crouch explains why the most important chapters in the Bible for properly understanding culture are the first two (Genesis 1 and 2) and the last two (Revelation 21 and 22). The Bible starts with a good world and ends with a glorious one. Sin (Genesis 3) and judgment (Revelation 20) are part of reality but they aren't what God intended or what will prevail in the end.

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"Culture Making" Part 1 Video Outline

The relationship between _____**Christianity**_____ and culture over the past century has become dysfunctional as both parties focus on the worst aspects of the other. Christians have become known for condemning, critiquing, and judging culture.

Movements like Fundamentalism have correlated holiness with what Christians *don't* do. The children of fundamentalists have reacted to their parents' **condemnation** of culture by **critiquing**, **copying**, or **consuming** culture.

What these four Cs have in common is that they are all reactions to culture but they don't add anything creative or new to it.

Twenty-first Century Prayer—"Deliver us from _____**culture**_____."

The Lord's Prayer, "deliver us from evil," has been replaced with "deliver us from culture." This assumes *evil* and *culture* are synonymous. This mindset ignores some important chapters in the Bible

Key chapters for properly understanding culture:

Genesis 1 and 2: Six times God says creation is good. It becomes "_____**very good**_____" when he makes humans as his image bearers and tells them to fill and subdue—"cultivate"—the world.

Revelation 21 and 22: God's goal is not a restored garden but a _____**holy city**_____. A city is where the depth and diversity of culture reaches critical mass. The work of culture will be brought into the city, not swept into the lake of fire.

The Bible starts with a good world and ends with a glorious one. Sin (Genesis 3) and judgment (Revelation 20) are part of reality but they aren't what God intended or what will prevail in the end.

We have to do our part to shape the *good* into the *very good*, to move from nature to culture. Cultivation doesn't happen automatically; humans have to do it.

Examples of culture:

- Grain to bread
- Grapes to wine
- Sound to music
- Minerals to jewels

"Culture Making" Part 1 Discussion Questions

1. **What are the four Cs that have characterized the approach many Christians take to culture?**

   Movements within Christianity over the past century such as Fundamentalism became known for **condemning** culture. They defined holiness primarily by what Christians *didn't* do. They rejected engagement with the culture and largely withdrew from society.

   The children of fundamentalists have reacted to their parents' condemnation by **critiquing**, **copying**, or **consuming** culture. What these four Cs have in common is that they are all reactions to culture but they don't add anything creative or new to it.

2. **Which of the four Cs do you think characterizes the church or denomination of which you are a part?**

   People who pray, "Deliver us from culture," are revealing what about their view of culture?

   When the phrase from the Lord's Prayer, "deliver us from evil" is replaced with "deliver us from culture," it shows a belief that evil and culture are synonymous. Culture is seen as the same thing as "the world" in the list of a Christian's enemies, i.e., the world, the flesh, and the devil.

   But if God were to answer this prayer, where would he deliver us to? Where would we go if we got completely away from culture, since it includes everything, the good and the bad.

   Perhaps a better approach is to pray for *protection* while we are engaged in seeking to change and redeem culture. We can interact with culture without being destroyed by it if we "wash our hands" (spiritual disciplines) regularly and we have a healthy "immune system" (vibrant relationship with the indwelling Spirit).

3. **What do the first two chapters and the last two chapters of the Bible add to our worldview?**

   The Bible starts with a good world (Genesis 1 and 2) and ends with a glorious one (Revelation 21 and 22). Sin (Genesis 3) and judgment (Revelation 20) are part of reality but they aren't where God started, nor where he plans to end.

   Six times in Genesis 1 and 2 God says creation is good. It becomes "very good" when he makes humans as his image bearers and tells them to be fruitful and multiply and to subdue and be good stewards of his creation.

   According to Revelation 21 and 22, the culmination of God's plan for humanity doesn't take place in a restored garden but in a holy city. A city is where the depth and diversity of culture reaches critical mass. The work of culture (the glory and honor of the nations) will be brought into the city (Revelation 21:26), not swept into the lake of fire.

4. What kind of worldview results from ignoring these important chapters?

If you start with the sin and the fall of Genesis 3, you are starting with the depravity of humanity and a creation subject to chaos and destruction. You are beginning outside the garden of Eden where pain, hardship, and violence characterize life.

If you end with Revelation 20, the focus is on judgment—the lake of fire—and not on a renewed heaven and earth that bring glory to God. If you begin with the fall and end with the lake of fire, this is bad news, not good news. But if you start with a good world (Gen. 1–2) and wind up with a gloriously renewed world (Rev. 21–22), this is good news indeed.

5. What are some examples of how cultivation takes something "good" in nature and makes it "very good"?

God put Adam is a beautiful garden and gave him the responsibility of cultivating it, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Genesis 2:15, NIV). As God's imagebearers and stewards, human beings have to do our part to cultivate the "good" things of nature into the "very good" things they can display our creativity and God's glory.

Cultivation doesn't happen automatically; humans have to do it. Examples of cultivation include

- Grain to bread
- Grapes to wine
- Sound to music
- Minerals to jewels

[*Ask students if they can think of any others.*]

"Culture Making" Part 2 Video

The good news that frames the Bible is that creation was "good" and became "very good" with the creation of God's image bearers. And in the end God rescues and redeems the world and gives it to his image bearers in a beautiful city they will inhabit forever.

The Bible gives two answers as to what went wrong in the middle of the story: 1) Idolatry—the putting of what God made in the place of God himself. The danger of idols is that they take over and destroy the lives of their followers. 2) Injustice—the sign that someone has tried to play God in the life of someone else. Injustice exaggerates the image of God in the powerful and debases it in the poor.

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"Culture Making" Part 2 Video Outline

God's story, as told in the Bible, moves from "good" to "very good" to "glory." This progression gives us a sense of hope. But two things went wrong in the middle of the story.

1. **Idolatry:**

   Idolatry is the putting of what God made in the place of God himself. The image bearers, meaning to represent God in the world, make substitute images instead. They turn to created things as a substitute for their Creator.

   Every idol makes two false promises:

   1. You shall not surely _____die_____—the conditions of a creature will not apply to you.
   2. You shall be like _____God_____—you will ascend out of your creaturely status into something better.

   The danger of idols is that they take over and destroy the lives of their followers.

   All idols work at first, but they don't keep working. They demand everything in the end and deliver nothing of what they promised.

   God hates that the world is full of _____false images_____ of himself.

   Any good thing can be an idol, such as exercise or wine.

2. **Injustice:**

   Injustice is the sign that someone is "trying to play God" in the life of someone else. Injustice exaggerates the image of God in the powerful and debases it in the poor.

   God hates idolatry and injustice for the same reason: they are the substitution of false images for the true image of God. Instead of "making" a false god (idolatry) someone is "playing" God in the lives of others (injustice).

   God does not leave us in our idolatry and injustice. He is _____restoring_____ his image in us and in creation. God is rescuing and redeeming the world and giving it to his image bearers in a beautiful city they will inhabit forever.

"Culture Making" Part 2 Discussion Questions

1. **The Bible begins and ends with good news, but what happened in the middle of the story?**

   The good news that frames the Bible is that in the beginning, creation was "good" and became "very good" with the creation of human beings as God's image bearers. And in the end God will establish his image bearers in a beautiful city forever, the crown jewel of a renewed earth.

   But between Genesis 1–2 and Revelation 21–22, two things went horribly wrong: Idolatry and injustice entered the story when humanity chose to believe the serpent instead of God (Genesis 3).

2. **What is idolatry?**

   Idolatry is putting something God made in the place of God himself. The image bearers who were meant to represent and worship God begin to make substitute images for him instead. Human beings put created things in the place of their Creator.

   These substitute images (idols) misrepresent God in many ways. They also make two promises they cannot keep:

   1. You shall not surely die—the conditions of a creature will not apply to you.
   2. You shall be like God—you will ascend out of your creaturely status into something better.

   At the root of these false promises is the lie that you can be great without God.

3. **Why are idols dangerous?**

   The danger of idols is that they take over and destroy the lives of their followers. Although idols appear to work at first, they don't keep working. They demand more and more in return for less and less. In the end they deliver nothing of what they promised.

   Every idol disappoints. It doesn't lead to freedom but to addiction and self-destruction. Even good things can become idols. Name three legitimate things that could easily become an idol in your life.

   Examples: exercise, food, alcohol, money, clothes, music, technology, entertainment, fashion, your reputation, family, and knowledge

4. What is injustice?

Injustice is when someone tries to play God in the life of someone else. Injustice exaggerates the image of God in the powerful and debases it in the poor. Injustice distorts the reality that we are all created equal and have the same intrinsic value.

One example of injustice mentioned in the video is the practice of bonded labor, e.g., slavery in India. The rich and powerful assume godlike control over the lives of the poor and dispossessed. Can you think of other examples of injustice in today's world?

Examples: bigotry and racism, dictatorships and repressive governments, religious persecution, child soldiers, prostitution, and sex slaves.

5. How are idolatry and injustice related?

Injustice and idolatry are really the same thing: the substitution of false images for the true God. Instead of "making" a false god (idolatry) someone is "playing" God in the lives of others (injustice). In both instances the Creator is being replaced by the creature.

When the biblical prophets spoke out against injustice, they often portrayed it as a form of idolatry. This is because both idolatry and injustice spring from the same desire to replace God with people or things. God hates both because they fill the world with false images of himself.

But God does not leave us in our idolatry and injustice; he is restoring his image in us and in creation. God is rescuing and redeeming the world that will one day be our eternal home.

Chapter 1 Key Points

Key Questions:

1. Should Christians care about culture?
2. Should Christians try to shape culture?

Key Terms:

1. Ecumenism
2. Evangelicalism
3. Fundamentalism
4. Gnosticism*
5. Imago Dei*
6. Metaphysics
7. Moral Majority
8. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*
9. Narcissism
10. Shalom*
11. Social Gospel
12. Two-Kingdoms Theology*
13. Worldview

Key Verses:

1. Genesis 1:26–28
2. Leviticus 19:9–15
3. Matthew 22:37–40*
4. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Key Works:

1. *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* by A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, James Orr, B. B. Warfield, and C. I. Scofield
2. *Theology for the Social Gospel* by Walter Rauschenbusch

Key Players:

1. Shane Claiborne
2. Jerry Falwell
3. Johannes Gutenberg
4. Dwight L. Moody
5. Walter Rauschenbusch

Key Events:

1. *Roe v. Wade*

**Short answer or essay question on the exam*

Chapter 1 Assignment

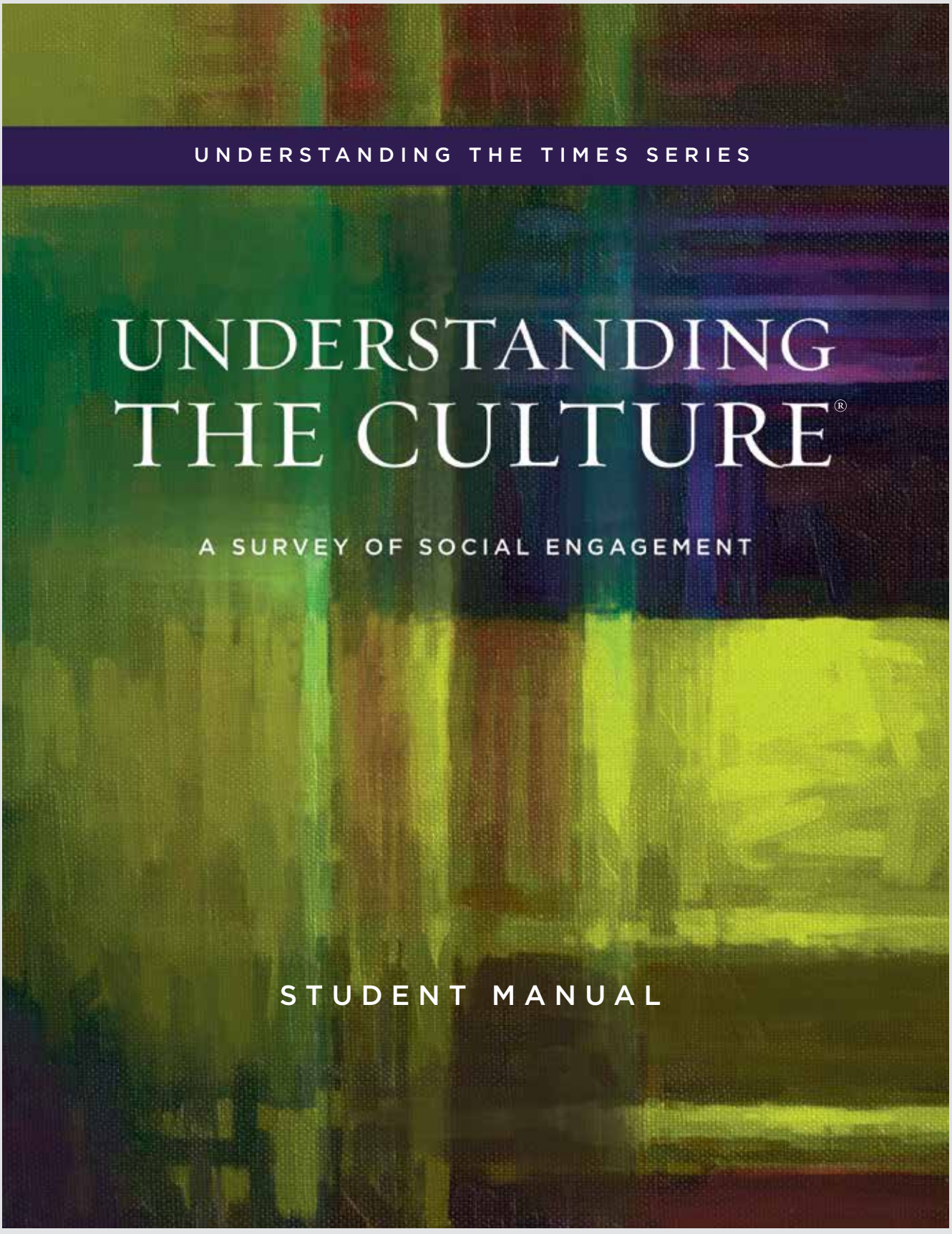
Answer the following questions with at least one paragraph.

1. List and briefly describe the five essential questions that comprise a worldview.

2. Why is a focus on God's glory central to the Christian worldview?

3. What is the doctrine of imago Dei, how does the biblical understanding of human beings different than that of any other worldview, and how should it affect our relationships with our neighbors?

4. How is our status as image bearers of God related to our use of words?



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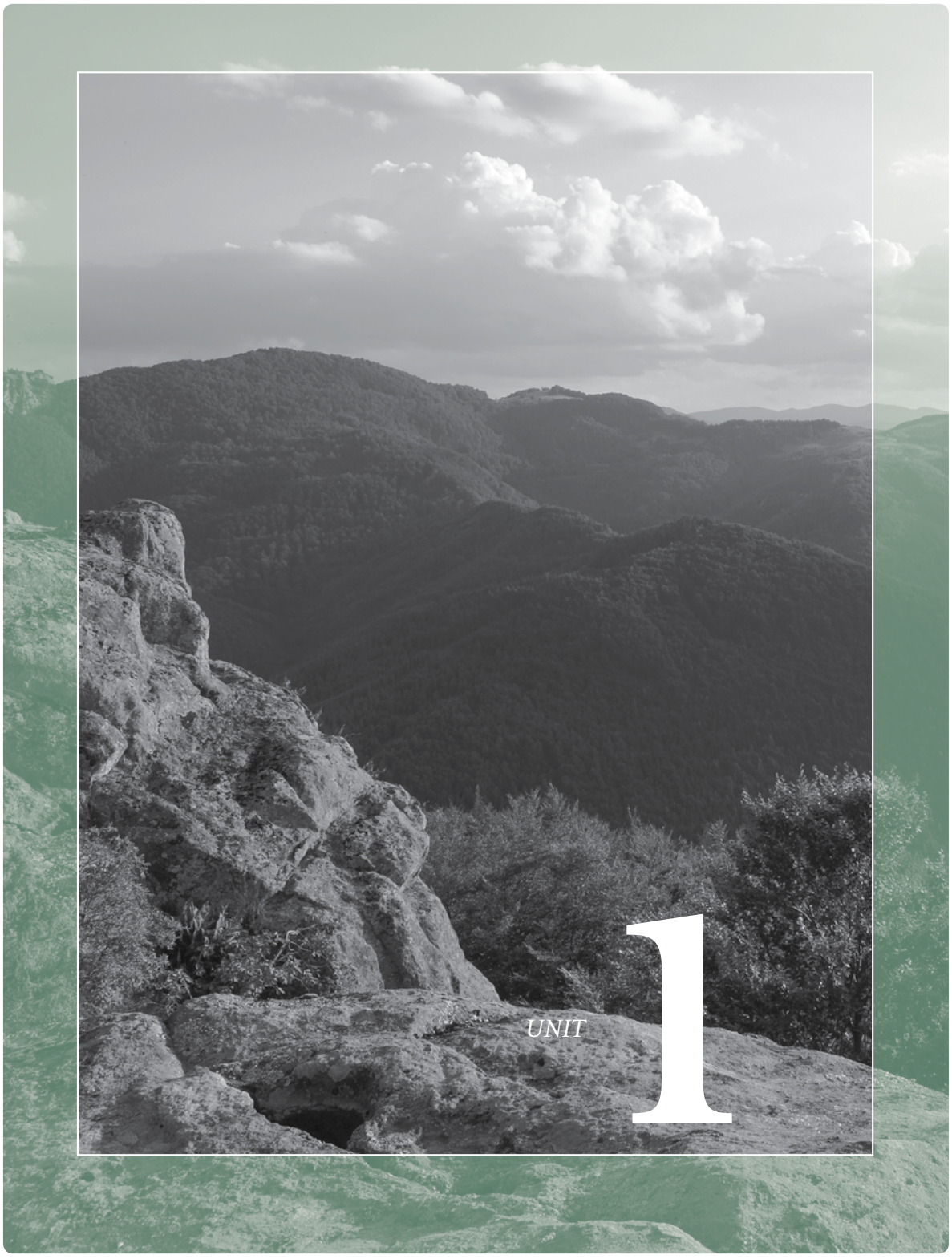

UNIT

1

1

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to:

1. recognize the importance of Christians to properly care about the world around us. [1.1]
2. recognize the consequences our ideas should have on our actions, and discuss the influence of our decisions on the world around us. [1.2]
3. identify the impact our concept of "the big picture" has on our caring for the world around us. [1.3]
4. discuss the implications of living in a universe that we can observe and how that demonstrates God's concern for humanity. [1.4]
5. explain how our answers to metaphysical questions, addressing both the positive and negative aspects of human progress, often lead to cultural conflict. [1.5]
6. analyze the culture conflict in America between liberal and fundamentalist movements in the early twentieth century. [1.6]
7. discuss the responses of Christian conservatism in the latter half of the twentieth century to cultural changes. [1.7]
8. identify the multiple reasons why Christian conservatism as a cultural movement began to fracture by the end of the twentieth century. [1.8]
9. identify and discuss the biblical reasons for Christians to concern themselves with the culture around us. [1.9]
10. identify and discuss the biblical directives for the attributes Christians ought to pursue when engaging with the culture. [1.10]

Chapter 1 Discussion Questions

1. **What is the overall purpose of this book? [1:1]**

2. **How has technology enabled us to make better decisions? [1:2]**

3. **If you had to go a week without any access to information technology or social media, how would your life be different?**

4. **What is the "anthropic principle?' [1:4]**

5. **What is "metaphysics" and what questions does it seek to answer? [1:5]**

6. **Does being a citizen of heaven mean we shouldn't get involved in the things of this world? [1.6]**

7. **What factors led to the creation of the Fundamentalist movement? [1:6]**

8. **What happened to the Fundamentalist movement? [1:6]**

9. **What are some issues over which Christians should leave their churches? What are some issues where disagreement doesn't necessarily call for breaking fellowship?**

10. **Who are the New Evangelicals?** [1:7]

11. **How did the New Evangelicals impact American culture?** [1:7]

12. **Which group do you most identify with: Fundamentalists, Liberals, New Evangelicals, or something else?** [1.7]

13. What factors caused Evangelicalism to splinter in the early twenty-first century? [1:8]

14. What is "the third way" suggested by this book between Secularism and Gnosticism? [1:8]

15. What are the main things God cares about? [1:9]

16. Is the command to love our neighbor strictly a New Testament concept or can it be found in the Old Testament? [1:9]

17. How does the biblical view of humanity differ from all other worldviews? [1:9]

18. What is narcissism and how is it affecting our culture? [1:9]

19. What is involved in pursuing a life of wisdom? [1:10]

20. What does it mean to live a worthy life? [1:10]

21. What role do words play in a caring life? [1:10]

22. What are some key things you will learn in this book? [1:11]

23. What factors determine if we go through life as "givers" or "takers"? [1:12]

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Andy Crouch notes the dysfunctional relationship between Christianity and culture in which both parties see each other at their worst. Christianity embraced a series of postures in the last hundred years that hasn't helped very much. Christians became known for condemning, critiquing, consuming, and copying culture instead of changing and creating it.

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Examples of culture:

- Grain to bread
- Grapes to wine
- Sound to music
- Minerals to jewels

"Culture Making" Part 1 Discussion Questions

1. **What are the four Cs that have characterized the approach many Christians take to culture?**

2. **Which of the four Cs do you think characterizes the church or denomination of which you are a part?**

3. **What do the first two chapters and the last two chapters of the Bible add to our worldview?**

4. **What kind of worldview results from ignoring these important chapters?**

5. **What are some examples of how cultivation takes something "good" in nature and makes it "very good"?**

"Culture Making" Part 2 Video

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The Bible gives two answers as to what went wrong in the middle of the story: 1) Idolatry—the putting of what God made in the place of God himself. The danger of idols is that they take over and destroy the lives of their followers. 2) Injustice—the sign that someone has tried to play God in the life of someone else. Injustice exaggerates the image of God in the powerful and debases it in the poor.

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"Culture Making" Part 2 Discussion Questions

1. **The Bible begins and ends with good news, but what happened in the middle of the story?**

2. **What is idolatry?**

3. **Why are idols dangerous?**

4. **What is injustice?**

5. **How are idolatry and injustice related?**

Chapter 1 Key Points

Key Questions:

1. Should Christians care about culture?
2. Should Christians try to shape culture?

Key Terms:

1. Ecumenism
2. Evangelicalism
3. Fundamentalism
4. Gnosticism*
5. Imago Dei*
6. Metaphysics
7. Moral Majority
8. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism*
9. Narcissism
10. Shalom*
11. Social Gospel
12. Two-Kingdoms Theology*
13. Worldview

Key Verses:

1. Genesis 1:26–28
2. Leviticus 19:9–15
3. Matthew 22:37–40*
4. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Key Works:

1. *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* by A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, James Orr, B. B. Warfield, and C. I. Scofield
2. *Theology for the Social Gospel* by Walter Rauschenbusch

Key Players:

1. Shane Claiborne
2. Jerry Falwell
3. Johannes Gutenberg
4. Dwight L. Moody
5. Walter Rauschenbusch

Key Events:

1. *Roe v. Wade*

**Short answer or essay question on the exam*

Chapter 1 Assignment

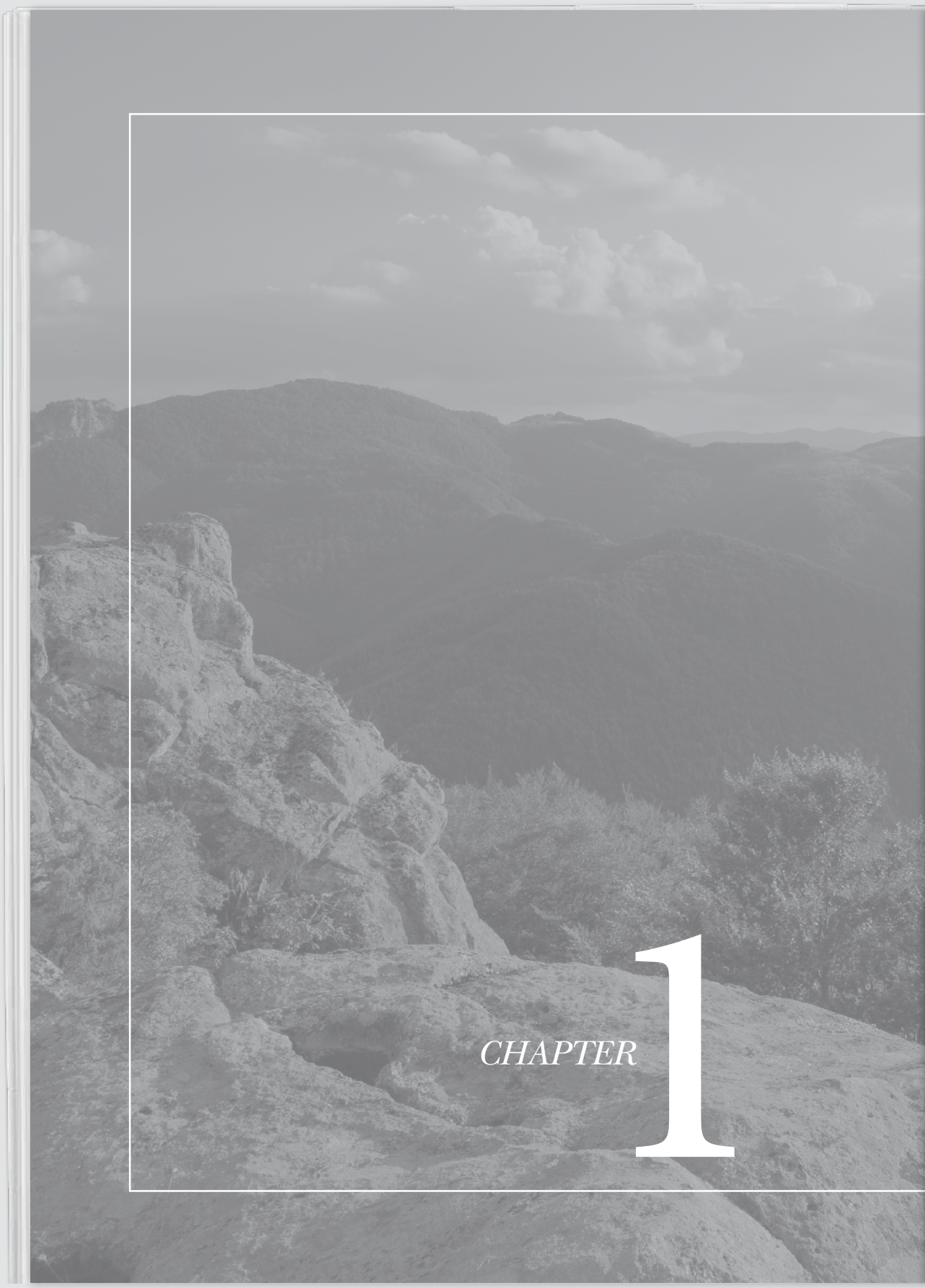
Answer the following questions with at least one paragraph.

1. List and briefly describe the five essential questions that comprise a worldview.

2. Why is a focus on God's glory central to the Christian worldview?

3. What is the doctrine of imago Dei, how does the biblical understanding of human beings different than that of any other worldview, and how should it affect our relationships with our neighbors?

4. How is our status as image bearers of God related to our use of words?



CHAPTER 1

1

INTRODUCTION

1. Life Is More Than Raisin Rugby

Job 12:7 says, "Ask the beasts, and they will teach you." As odd as it seems, I once learned an important life lesson from chickens. Several years ago my wife and I purchased a home in the country. Naturally, we decided to get chickens. We didn't expect them to arrive in the mail, but they did—via a package about the size of a frozen dinner.

Housed in a box in our laundry room, the chicks provided endless hours of entertainment for our children. One day while fixing lunch, I heard an unbelievable racket emanating from the laundry room. Rushing in, I found my two-year-old daughter dropping raisins into the box. One chick discovered a raisin,

grabbed it in his beak, and bolted. The others gave chase. Another stole the raisin and lit out, his fellows in hot pursuit.

Wow, raisin rugby, I thought.

Then I realized my daughter had actually dropped a *handful* of raisins into the box, more than enough for each chick to have one. Yet none of them noticed, consumed as they were with competing fiercely for that first raisin. These chicks couldn't contemplate abundance, even with raisins raining down on them. They had only one thought in their raisin-sized brains: others have it; I want it; I must take it.

We aren't as different from these chicks as we might like to think. Since the fall of humanity, we tend to be takers, not givers. God, on the other hand, gives generously. One of the first things Scripture reveals about him, in fact, is how he desired the abundance and flourishing of humans and the world. He equipped us to be fruitful and bring joy to his creation and one another. Tragically, like those rugby chickens, our first parents chose to be stingy, jealous, and selfish. Humanity has followed suit ever since.

In God's offer of redemption, however, we're given another chance. Christ provides the grace and opportunity to have our identities changed back from being takers to being the givers he created us to be. When that happens to individuals, communities, and even nations, cultures are transformed for the good.

Christ provides the grace and opportunity to have our identities changed back from being takers to being the givers he created us to be.

Understanding the Culture is the third book in a trilogy. In book 1, *Understanding the Faith*, we got to know who God is based on the Bible, and what his plan for the world looks like. In book 2, *Understanding the Times*, we grappled with how the biblical Christian worldview compares to other prominent worldviews, and in so doing, we found it to be more intelligible, reasonable, and livable than the other philosophies of our age.

In this book, we turn our attention to the needs of the world around us and ask whether the Bible really speaks to the pressing issues of our age. You will *not* find in these pages a manual with clever plans for saving humanity. It's actually the opposite. This book is an invitation to stop playing God and start engaging the world around us based on his intended design for it and for us. It isn't enough to merely start caring. We must care *well*.

Most people are concerned about what is going on in the world around them, or at least they say they are. But the form our caring takes betrays what we really believe. If the homeless ask us for money, do we give it and drive away, do we give them a meal, do we engage them in a conversation about what they really need, do we refer them to a homeless shelter, or do we walk away and in the next election vote for a government-entitlement program to help the poor?

Ideas have consequences because we act on them. We all live based on what we believe to be true. Christians must act on biblical ideas not just in our personal conduct but also in the big issues of our day, such as life, marriage, military force, the economy, and justice.

As we seek to make a difference, we're standing on the shoulders of giants. It's hard to imagine where our world would be today without Christians applying biblical ideas over the centuries. The question we face is this: Are such ideas still relevant? We can agree that Christians ought to be nice people. If you met a group of young men in a dark alley, for

example, it ought to make a difference if they were coming from a Bible study.[1] But does this suggest that we ought to apply the Bible's teachings at a cultural level? Should we *try* to shape culture? Should society put up with our trying to do so?

If the primary identifying characteristic of Christians is pleasantness, then being nice ought to be the primary goal of our lives. But if what the Bible reveals about why we're here on this planet is actually true, then being caring people is much more than smiling and checking boxes on a do-gooder list. Rather, Christian caring ought to be the very best kind of caring. It ought to unleash human ingenuity. It ought to point the way for people to be reconciled to God. It ought to restore people to a high capacity of bearing God's image. It ought to bring glory to the Creator. So how does Christian caring start?

Christian caring ought to be the very best kind of caring. It ought to restore people to a high capacity of bearing God's image.

2. Christian Caring Starts with Good Decisions

All cultures, including ours, are products of people's decisions, both good and bad. Jim Clifton, chairman and CEO of Gallup, argues that people make between ten and twenty thousand small decisions a day. Multiply this by the US population, and people make an estimated *quadrillion* decisions (that's a one followed by fifteen zeros) every year in America alone.[2] Our personal legacy is the sum of our decisions over a lifetime. By extension, our *cultural* legacy results from the interaction of everyone's decisions.

Our decisions have an enormous influence. Think about what you're doing right now: reading a book. Books influence the world largely because a man named Johannes Gutenberg had ideas about their importance. He acted on those ideas by inventing a printing system that used movable type to rapidly reproduce words on the printed page. His innovations changed the world.

Gutenberg's genius as an inventor was just the beginning of the story. Gutenberg saw printing as a means of rapidly spreading God's truth. He hoped that the printing press would "win every soul that comes into the world by her word no longer written at great expense by hands easily palsied, but multiplied like the wind by an untiring machine."[3]

Because Gutenberg's press was based on the design of wine presses he had seen in his region of Germany, wine became his figure of speech for the impact he hoped his invention would have:

> Yes … it is a press, certainly, but a press from which shall flow in inexhaustible streams the most abundant and most marvellous liquor that has ever flowed to relieve the thirst of men! Through it, God will spread his Word. A spring of pure truth shall flow from it: like a new star it shall scatter the darkness of ignorance and cause a light hithertofore unknown to shine amongst men.[4]

Think of it. A few modifications to a wine press enabled ideas to be disseminated rapidly. It dramatically changed learning and made it nearly impossible to suppress viewpoints those in power didn't like. No wonder Gutenberg has been named "man of the millennium."[5] The

book you hold in front of you is a direct result of one man's invention. The ready availability of the written word is still changing the world.

Many people today no longer read the printed page but use computer devices of some sort, like tablets or smartphones. In their most basic form, computers are nothing but complex arrangements of glass, plastic, silicone, and various metals. Every part comes from the earth, from sand on the seashore to minerals found deep underground. Without mining, oil exploration, information theory, engineering, intricate manufacturing systems, and a well-developed system of economic exchange, we might very well be scratching drawings on a cave wall, not texting on smartphones.

The book you hold in front of you is a direct result of one man's invention. The ready availability of the written word is still changing the world.

As it is, the spread of ideas enabled by technology continues to grow by leaps and bounds. The computing power in your cell phone is more than NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) possessed when *Apollo* landed on the moon in 1969. That microchip hidden in the musical greeting card you got on your birthday has more computing power than all the Allied forces in World War II possessed in 1945. Your PlayStation or Xbox contains more computing power than a multi-million-dollar military supercomputer in 1997.[6]

The real genius of technology is its ability to extend power to those who, without it, would have no power at all. People now use handheld devices to exchange money, run businesses, and even deploy social media in revolt against undemocratic regimes. Without millions of decisions from people all over the world, you wouldn't be reading right now. You probably wouldn't even know how to read. You might not even have lived past infancy.

Clearly, we must learn to make good decisions about the natural world, technology, economics, and so forth. Christian caring starts with good decisions, but that's not the whole picture. In fact, if we just focus on good decision making, we'll miss the picture entirely.

3. Christian Caring Starts with Seeing the Big Picture

As we've seen, good decisions can lead to good results. But bad decisions have an impact as well. People can use perfectly good computers to destroy the dignity and reputations of others, enable more efficient traffic in illegal drugs, or disseminate child pornography. One or two isolated bad decisions probably won't hurt much. Eating a whole bag of potato chips won't really hurt either, unless it becomes a daily habit. Over time, though, patterns emerge that move us like a swift river current. For a while we make our decisions, but inevitably our decisions begin making us. As the prophet Joel cried out, "Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14). Decisions matter.

Perhaps you've wondered about the impact your decisions have. Is it possible to somehow rise above your circumstances and gain a fuller sense of what your life means?

Entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson thinks he knows how to help you do it, and as long as you're willing to pay $250,000, you can sign up to ride in one of his Virgin Galactic spaceships for a six-minute view of Earth from sixty-eight miles above its surface.[7] Justin Bieber, Ashton Kutcher, and Paris Hilton are among nearly seven hundred people who have purchased tickets

as of this writing and await the day when Virgin Galactic completes testing and begins passenger flights.[8]

On their trip aboard a Virgin Galactic spaceship, the lucky few will be strapped in a specially designed aircraft and propelled to an altitude of fifty thousand feet. According to Virgin Galactic, once released from the "mother ship," there is a "brief moment of quiet" followed by "a wave of unimaginable but controlled power." And then

> you are instantly pinned back into your seat, overwhelmed but enthralled by the howl of the rocket motor and the eye-watering acceleration which, as you watch the read-out, has you traveling in a matter of seconds, at almost 3000 mph, 4 times the speed of sound. As you hurtle through the edges of the atmosphere, the large windows show the cobalt blue sky turning to mauve and indigo and finally to black. You're on a high, this is really happening, you're loving it.… The rocket motor has been switched off and it is quiet. But it's not just quiet, it's QUIET.… What's really getting your senses screaming now though, is that the gravity which has dominated every movement you've made since the day you were born is not there any more.… After a graceful mid-space summersault you find yourself at a large window and what you see … is a view that you've seen in countless images but the reality is so much more beautiful … and produces emotions that are strong but hard to define. The blue map, curving into the black distance is familiar but has none of the usual marked boundaries. The incredibly narrow ribbon of atmosphere looks worryingly fragile. What you are looking at is the source of everything it means to be human, and it is home.[9]

As a Virgin Galactic customer, you'll briefly glimpse something only 555 humans have seen prior to the advent of commercial space travel: continents, oceans, and the blue tint of the earth's atmosphere.[10]

Certainly, some people are signing up for the thrill because they have excess wealth. According to Virgin Galactic's website, though, the company's mission eclipses mere thrill seeking or luxury travel. It provides a window into what is really important in life. "We think it will be actually something of a transformative experience," says Virgin Galactic CEO George Whitesides. "Once the engine shuts off, the cabin will be devoid of any mechanical noise from the inside and any atmospheric sound from the outside, so people will be able to make a deep and organic connection with the universe and the planet. It should be an extraordinary moment."[11]

Maybe the visionaries behind Virgin Galactic genuinely think space travel as a consciousness-raising experience will improve lives. Or perhaps their sales pitch seeks to make customers feel less guilty about spending $250,000 on a six-minute experience rather than using that money to improve the lives and situations of starving and destitute people here on Earth. What you think the big picture is makes all the difference in the world.

What you think the big picture is makes all the difference in the world.

For many of the first astronauts, seeing Earth from space resulted in something much more than a "connection with the universe and the planet." Colonel Jim

Irwin, one of only twelve men to actually land and walk on the moon's surface, said of his experience, "I felt the power of God as I'd never felt it before."[12] For Irwin, seeing the earth from space turned his thoughts not toward creation's fragility but toward the majesty of the creator.

4. Christian Caring Starts with What God Cares About—People

From a biblical perspective, people are at the heart of what God cares about. The earth's atmosphere, the majesty of the oceans, and the beauty of the landscape take on significance because of God's image bearers. People matter most in a biblical worldview. To many, though, this kind of talk is pure folly. Edwin A. Burtt, an American philosopher who grew up as the son of missionaries to China and later rejected his faith, said gloomily, "The ultimate accommodation necessary in a wise plan of life is acceptance of a world not made for man, owing him nothing, and in its major processes quite beyond his control."[13]

Was Burtt right? Is there no plan behind creation? You might be surprised at how many scientists disagree with him and hold that some intelligent force fine-tuned the universe to contain all the properties that make intelligent life inevitable. As Albert Einstein affirmed, "The harmony of natural law … reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."[14]

People matter most in a biblical worldview.

Embracing the **anthropic principle** (*anthro* means "pertaining to humanity"), many scientists argue that we can observe the universe only because it exists in a way that allows us as observers to exist. Robert Jastrow, an agnostic astrophysicist instrumental in NASA's development, wrote, "The anthropic principle is the most interesting development next to the proof of the creation, and it is even more interesting because it seems to say that science itself has proven, as a hard fact, that this universe was made, was designed, for man to live in. It's a very theistic result."[15]

If Einstein was right that there is intelligence behind the universe, and if Jastrow was right that the universe is the way it is so that humanity can exist, then any view of the world that diminishes the importance of people is missing the most important fact about our existence here.

Anthropic Principle: **the theory that the universe contains all the necessary properties that make the existence of intelligent life inevitable.**

Understanding that importance isn't always easy, of course. In some ways, being unable to see people from space would be a relief. We wouldn't be confronted with starvation or crime or abuse. We wouldn't feel the pain of watching those we care about undergoing chemotherapy or cowering in fear as mortar shells screamed overhead. But we wouldn't see the majesty of humanity either—the joy of seeing the smile on a child's face, the thrill of watching a couple fall in love or a son or daughter receive an acceptance letter from college, or the exhilaration of hearing that a loved one has overcome a long-held fear.

The biblical witness is that people are made in the image of God and are central to his plan. This changes what we care about and why. We still care about the planet not because we see humans as a cancer but because focusing on people is to care about what God cares about.

5. Why We Should Care about What God Cares About

If there truly is a God who has always existed, and who at specific points in time created matter and the universe, then it is reasonable to ask why our creator made us.

The biblical witness is that people are made in the image of God and are central to his plan. This changes what we care about and why.

As we've seen in the previous books in this series, Christianity is intellectually sound. There is strong evidence that the universe is a product of design, that the Bible accurately reveals who this designer is, and that it points us to how we might come to know him. In this book, we'll see that once these and other biblical ideas took hold, the world rapidly began to change for the better.

Up until a couple of hundred years ago, life went on as it had for millennia. Widespread poverty reigned well into the eighteenth century. Deplorable working conditions, starvation, and disease were part of life for most people. Then something changed, and quickly. The amount of wealth in the world increased rapidly, as did the standard of living, safety, and health of people around the world. It wasn't "accidental or a matter of luck," author Sylvia Nasar points out, "but the result of human intention, will, and knowledge."[16]

What economist Cleon Skousen referred to as the "5,000-year leap" dramatically improved conditions for humanity, advancing people toward prosperity more in the past two hundred years than in the previous five thousand.[17] Today's US economy is thirty times bigger than it was two hundred years ago.[18] Prosperity is spreading, and people around the world are rapidly being lifted out of poverty. According to the World Bank, extreme poverty has dropped in half just in the last generation, from 36 percent of the world's population to 18 percent.[19]

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We don't have to go into outer space to see what has happened and why. Beyond the bustle of daily life, something really important is going on in the human race. Every religious tradition has explanations for it, for how we got here and what we ought to do. Some say it's because of enlightened thinking. Others say it's because of revolution against illicit power. Still others say it's because we're achieving higher consciousness.

Yet few worldviews can account fully for the dark side of progress as well. While we gain the ability to alleviate suffering and pursue stability for unprecedented numbers of people, humanity has also developed unprecedented means of destroying itself. If we want to account for all of reality, we must not ignore this. We need to know what is really real.

When people talk about the nature of reality, they're engaging in an area of study philosophers call **metaphysics**. In Greek, the word *metaphysics* means "beyond the natural things" (*meta* means "beyond"; *physics* means "natural things"). In grappling with what is ultimately

real, people tend to ask five questions. We analyzed these questions in the first two books in this trilogy, but they're worth reviewing briefly here:

***Metaphysics:* the branch of philosophy that seeks to understand the nature of ultimate reality.**

1. Origin. Where did we come from? Some say God created us to bear his image. Others say humans evolved through random-chance processes. And there are many more views as well. They can't all be right, but which are wrong?

2. Identity. Who are we? What is a human being? Does every human being have intrinsic worth and dignity, or are worth and dignity determined by external factors, skills, and attributes? And if there is something wrong with us, what is it and how do we fix it?

3. Meaning. What is real and true, and how do we know? What is life all about? Is there purpose to our lives, or must we contrive it somehow? Is reality real or an illusion? Why do humans not only exist but also wonder about why they exist?

4. Morality. How should we live? Are there rules for the good life? Who makes them? Are they true for all times and all cultures, or do they depend on our circumstances? Is morality based on feelings? Does morality change if our feelings change?

5. Destiny. What happens next? Where is history headed? Is there an afterlife? How do we explain what is wrong with the world—the poverty, injustice, pain, and sickness? Should we try to fix things or merely look forward to a life beyond this one?

These five questions are ultimate in the sense that everyone answers them, if not with their minds, then by the way they live. Their answers form their **worldview**.

Everyone answers these ultimate questions, if not with their minds, then by the way they live. Their answers form their worldview.

Even among those who believe the Bible, differing answers can lead to cultural conflict (the Reformation, for example). One such conflict took place in the twentieth century between varying groups of Christians based on specific theological understandings. It so shaped the way Christians today think about cultural engagement that it would be hard for us to answer the question about how Christians should be involved in society without first understanding what transpired.

6. The Controversy: Fundamentalism versus Liberalism

When Shane Claiborne walks onstage, the audience sees a skinny white guy with dreadlocks and a dry sense of humor and hears his message about separating from society. "Jesus taught that his followers … should not attempt to 'run the world,'" he says.[20] For Claiborne, Christians are citizens of heaven alone. We should have no allegiance to an earthly kingdom. The best we can do is form an alternative, a community that's attractive enough to make people want to join us.

In short, reform is hopeless. It's time to bail out.

Claiborne's approach may be new, but his message is not. More than one hundred years ago, a prominent evangelist named Dwight L. Moody explained his message as follows: "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel. God has given me a life-boat, and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'"[21] The world is passing away, Moody thought, and nothing is of ultimate value except ensuring that people go to heaven when they die. As brilliant and innovative as Moody was, his view was certainly not the way the majority of Christians in history saw it. How did this kind of thinking come about?

At the turn of the twentieth century, there was widespread concern that American Protestantism was becoming liberal. America's greatest universities, founded largely as Christian institutions, were being run by people who denied doctrines such as the holiness of God, the divinity of Christ, and the truth of the Scriptures. Fanning these flames, a New York City pastor named Walter Rauschenbusch published *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, which defined *sin* as "selfishness" and implied that salvation would come by ushering in the kingdom of God through good works that changed society.[22]

The world is passing away, Moody thought, and nothing is of ultimate value except ensuring that people go to heaven when they die.

Rauschenbusch openly identified himself as a socialist, which inevitably caused concern that he had rejected biblical orthodoxy and embraced Darwinian evolution and communism. The reaction was immediate and intense. If this new **social gospel** was in any way replacing the true gospel, there were a good many Christians who wanted to stay far away from it. It wasn't that they didn't care about the culture—many of them were politically active, such as social-reform-minded Democrats William Jennings Bryan, three-time candidate for president, and William Bell Riley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, and founder of what is now the University of Northwestern, where Billy Graham got his start.

Rather, many thought Rauschenbusch and others like him were offering a false form of salvation. In response, theology professors A. C. Dixon and R. A. Torrey decided to set forth what they saw as the basic principles of Christianity in a series of twelve volumes titled The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth. A wealthy businessman named Lyman Stewart funded the series, and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (B.I.O.L.A., now called Biola University) published it.[23] Well-known theologians of the time, including James Orr, B. B. Warfield, and C. I. Scofield, wrote featured essays, and copies were distributed free to pastors, missionaries, and Christian educators.

Social Gospel: **a late eighteenth-century, early nineteenth-century postmillennial movement popular among liberal Protestants that sought to eradicate social evils like poverty and racism in the belief that this would usher in the second coming of Christ.**

Out of the publication of The Fundamentals rose a new movement, **fundamentalism**, which George Marsden defined as "militantly anti-modernist evangelicalism."[24] Fundamentalists strongly sensed a responsibility

to bring maturity to the American theological landscape and also, in some senses, to be the "older brother" who helped American culture avoid self-destruction.

Fundamentalism: **an early twentieth-century Protestant movement that sought to defend orthodox Christianity against the challenges of liberalism, modernism, and Darwinism by requiring strict adherence to a set of "fundamental" doctrines.**

Dispensational Premillennialism: **an eschatological doctrine that establishes a sequence of events for the end times, asserting that the anti-Christ will soon rise, the second coming of Christ is imminent, and all things will culminate in a millennial reign of Christ.**

Unfortunately for its adherents, the fundamentalist movement unraveled as a consequence of relentless attacks in the culture, exhaustion, and infighting. The sense of fierce theological independence that gave fundamentalism its start made it difficult for its leaders to form a cohesive movement.[25] In the 1930s, the fundamentalist coalition, which had included Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists, began splintering along doctrinal lines. Many of the movement's leaders embraced a controversial new doctrine called **dispensational premillennialism**, which argued that the end of all things was coming and that the anti-Christ would soon rise. One sign of this, they argued, was that churches would discard their doctrinal beliefs in pursuit of a misguided sort of unity, the Interchurch World Movement, often derisively called **ecumenism by fundamentalists**.[26] To dispensational premillennialists, there was only one reasonable response: leave such churches and "be separate from them" (2 Cor. 6:17).[27] Continued association was a sign of being secretly wed to liberal doctrines.[28]

These conflicts are still with us today. Churches are still forfeiting essential doctrines. Mockery of biblical doctrines is common. Many churches have become proxies of one political party or another or have endlessly divided themselves through increasingly fine doctrinal distinctions. Pastors are still openly living lifestyles that contradict biblical teachings about marital purity. Where do we go from here?

7. The Rise of Christian Conservatism

Out of the cultural conflict between liberalism and fundamentalism rose a new movement of Protestant Christians who claimed a born-again experience, believed the Bible is true, and were involved in like-minded churches. They called themselves the "new evangelicals." In the 1950s, Christian leaders who wanted to see orthodox Christianity more effectively engage the culture formed the National Association of Evangelicals, with Harold Ockenga as president. Joining the organization were Carl F. H. Henry and other evangelicals who held to conservative positions on the truth of Scripture and were strongly critical of liberal theology and **Secularism**.[29] This new

Ecumenism: **the push to foster unity among various Christian traditions that disagree on key doctrinal issues.**

tradition became the largest religious movement in the United States, constituting up to 47 percent of the population in 2005 before decreasing to 25 percent by 2014.[30]

But then the 1960s happened. The Vietnam War. Drugs. The sexual revolution. Rebellion against authority. Though only a small percentage of the population actually participated in it, their numbers were large enough to shift American culture in a very different direction. This is especially true of the sexual revolution, which led to the 1973 Supreme Court decision *Roe v. Wade*, legalizing surgical abortion on demand.

Secularism: **an atheistic and materialistic worldview that advocates a public society free from the influence of religion.**

Without a strong sense of what Christian cultural engagement involved, **evangelicalism** seemed incapable of responding to these trends. For example, the organization producing this book (Summit Ministries) took an immediate stand against the *Roe v. Wade* decision through the publication of David Noebel's book *Slaughter of the Innocent*. Yet other evangelical groups were neutral or even viewed abortion favorably, at least at first. Shortly after the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Southern Baptist Convention's Baptist Press celebrated the decision for having "advanced the cause of religious liberty, human equality and justice."[31] Today the Southern Baptist Convention is strongly pro-life, as is the larger evangelical Christian community, but at the time, evangelicals struggled to figure out how to respond to cultural issues.

Evangelicalism: **a mid-twentieth-century Protestant movement that sees the essence of Christianity as the gospel: salvation comes by grace through faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ.**

Then an evangelical ran for president. Not only was he a self-proclaimed born-again Christian, but he was also a Sunday school teacher in a Baptist church and an honored military veteran. His name was Jimmy Carter. In the wake of the Nixon Watergate scandal, the nation was craving a president whose honesty and decency seemed above reproach. Carter was elected handily.

Things immediately started going wrong. Carter's approach to economic issues seemed to make things worse, not better. Gas prices skyrocketed. Inflation was out of control. And the people he put in charge of social policy were quite liberal in their viewpoints. For example, the Carter administration formed the Department of Education, which immediately began taking steps that, for many evangelicals, threatened the freedom of parents to educate their children in Christian schools. All of these actions left America dispirited.

Moral Majority: **a late twentieth-century political and religious movement founded by Jerry Falwell to further Christian ideals through conservative politics—namely, promoting laws that restrict abortion on demand and protect religious expression in public education.**

One Virginia pastor had had enough. He set about forming a network of patriotic, concerned Christians to respond to the drift away from Christianity that he perceived in America. The pastor's name was Jerry Falwell, and his organization was called the **Moral Majority**. Millions of people joined, and the effect was immediate. Falwell's organization and similar groups got behind the

presidential candidacy of former California governor Ronald Reagan. Before an audience of fifteen thousand Christian leaders in Dallas, Texas, Reagan said, "I know this is a non-partisan gathering, and so I know that you can't endorse me, but I only brought that up because I want you to know that I endorse you and what you're doing."[32]

To many people, Reagan was a hero who changed the course of history.

The overwhelming popularity of Ronald Reagan enabled conservatives to enact many parts of their agenda, primarily lowering the federal income-tax rate and strengthening foreign policy. The effect was dramatic: lower unemployment, lower inflation, and increased economic growth. To many people who remember that era, Reagan was a hero who changed the course of history.

8. The End of Christian Conservatism as a Mass Movement

The influence of Christian conservatism continued through the turn of the century, even though it waned in the 1990s as it faced unrelenting criticism from cultural elites in both political parties and the media. Despite a vague sense that Christian conservatism had run its course, the movement largely succeeded in accomplishing many of its aims, which included obtaining restrictions to abortion on demand and establishing a system of Christian schools and colleges across the country, some of which became quite large, including Liberty University, which Jerry Falwell founded during the Moral Majority days. Groups like the Christian Action Council, cofounded by theologian Harold O. J. Brown and former US surgeon general C. Everett Koop, not only inspired the pro-life movement but also helped establish a network of crisis pregnancy centers that opposed abortion yet still offered counseling and practical support to women with unwanted pregnancies.[33]

***Two-Kingdoms Theology:* based on an idea expressed by Martin Luther, two-kingdoms theology distinguishes between the kingdom of God (i.e., the church) and the kingdom of humanity (i.e., the state), contending that Christians should not promote their religious views outside the kingdom of God.**

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, though, evangelicalism began to splinter for at least three reasons. First, there was a growing resistance to the way Christians were involved in the culture. Mostly, the movement was seen as too political. Separationists like Shane Claiborne held this view, as well as a small yet influential group of Presbyterian theologians who embraced what is known as the **two-kingdoms theology**. According to this view, Martin Luther's distinction between the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of humanity actually represents the kingdom of the church and the kingdom of the world, and therefore the Bible's teachings are relevant only to the life of the church, not to civil government. Says Michael Horton, one of the two-kingdom theologians: "The central message of Christianity is not a worldview, a way of life, or a program for personal and societal change; it is a gospel."[34]

The second reason evangelicalism began to splinter has less to do with a well-thought-out theological position than with a loss of enchantment among those in the rising generation.

LifeWay researcher Ed Stetzer found in 2007 that of those who regularly attended youth group as teens, only about 30 percent regularly attended church as twentysomethings.[35] Saying they needed a break from church, young adults seemed to stop seeing the Christian faith as important to their everyday lives. Christian Smith, a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame, has suggested that most young people who claim to be Christian have very shallow roots. Their primary theological beliefs are that God loves them and wants them to be happy, a view he calls **moralistic therapeutic diesm**.[36] To this way of thinking, God is a kindly grandfather who gives us treats and chuckles at our naughty antics.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism: **a term coined by sociologist Christian Smith in reference to the shallow beliefs of many young Christians in the twenty-first century; the belief that God loves everyone and wants them to be happy.**

The third reason evangelicalism began coming apart is a rebranded reemergence of an old heresy called **gnosticism**. In this view, what we do in this world is really irrelevant because ultimate reality is not physical but spiritual. In the early days of the church, after Jesus's resurrection, gnostics went so far as to proclaim that Jesus didn't really appear in the flesh, because they saw the physical world as evil, and appearing in the flesh would have meant that Jesus participated in evil. Early church leaders condemned gnosticism as a radical and dangerous misunderstanding of the gospel. John the apostle stated very strongly that anyone who "does not confess [that] Jesus [came in the flesh] is not from God" (1 John 4:3). Still, in modern times, discouragement with the way things are going has led many people, including many Christians, to flirt with the idea that the physical world is unimportant.

Gnosticism: **a second-century heretical Christian movement that taught that the material world was created and maintained by a lesser divine being, that matter and the physical body are inherently evil, and that salvation can be obtained only through an esoteric knowledge of divine reality and the self-denial of physical pleasures.**

Today, whether because of embarrassment at Christian political involvement, theological shallowness, or a rising sense that what we do in the physical world doesn't matter, evangelical Christianity in America is declining in both popularity and influence. In fact, in 2009 Michael Spencer predicted in a widely read *Christian Science Monitor* op-ed that evangelicalism would collapse within a decade.[37] Others, however, have taken issue with such a dire assessment, pointing out that while less committed believers seem to be moving away from orthodoxy, the number of committed evangelicals remains steady. Still, it's hard to see churches being converted into playhouses, libraries, skate parks, and nightclubs and not wonder whether Spencer's predictions are coming true.

In this book, our aim is not to "save" evangelical Christianity. Rather, we wish to see the difference it would make if we consistently applied a biblical worldview to today's perplexing issues. To do this, we'll need to explore a middle way between the secular idea that the physical world is all there is and that the spiritual world is irrelevant, and the gnostic idea that the physical world is irrelevant because only the spiritual world is ultimately real. The approach

we'll test rests on the ideas that both the physical and the spiritual matter to God. As a spiritual being, God made creation and proclaimed it "good."

The gospel doesn't deny or trivialize any aspect of our fallen humanity but offers us full restoration. In other words, as the Colson Center's John Stonestreet observes, we're not saved from our humanness but to it.[38] The revered thirteenth-century theologian Thomas Aquinas put it this way: "Grace does not destroy nature, but completes it."[39]

At the outset, we readily admit that in addition to the opposition Christianity faces in the world, there are significant differences among Christians themselves. Such categories as "born-again" or "evangelical" or "fundamentalist," even though they are often used in a derogatory fashion, are not monolithic. They include people of all races and political persuasions, as well as a bewildering array of theological beliefs. Undoubtedly, the majority of evangelicals describe themselves as politically conservative, but even this category defies description when it comes to issues like the appropriate level of government intervention, taxes, the best way to care for the poor, foreign policy, and so forth.

Today the question for many Christians is whether it is even possible to be actively concerned about what is happening in the world without resorting to blunt political force on the one hand or seemingly pious separation on the other. Is it possible for Christians to care about culture without implying that we are somehow responsible for bringing about God's kingdom on Earth? Might there be a way to bring Christians together across long-drawn theological lines to focus on how to help everyone flourish in our culture without abandoning firm adherence to biblical truth?

Might there be a way to bring Christians together across long-drawn theological lines to focus on how to help everyone flourish in our culture without abandoning firm adherence to biblical truth?

These are not easy questions. But the answer to each question is yes. Let's examine why.

9. What Are the Biblical Reasons for Caring?

As Christians, we want to care about what God cares about. From Scripture we can discern that God cares about his glory, that we bear his image, and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. He cares about a great deal more, of course, but from these three principles we can build a faithful biblical response to the most pressing issues of our age.

God Cares about His Glory

In the New Testament, the Greek word for "glory" is *doxa*, which means "good reputation" or "honor." Saint Augustine defined *glory* as "*clara notitia cum laude*," or "brilliant celebrity with praise."[40] God's glory is so immense that all of nature proclaims it. Psalm 19:1 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." In the world to come, God's glory will sustain us. Revelation 21:23 says of heaven, "The city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb."

Sin has caused humans to fall short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23).[41] Even worse, in our sin, we attempt to exchange the glory of God for created images (Ps. 106:20; Rom. 1:23).[42] Because

of God's grace, though, we may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:2),[43] and we can look forward to freedom from bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:21).[44]

Jesus Christ made this redemption possible. He is, according to Scripture, the glory of God. Hebrews 1:3 says, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power."

It is in and for his glory that Jesus Christ calls us and equips us for great things. Second Peter 1:3 tells us that "[God's] divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence." This is why 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

God Cares That We Bear His Image

In the very name God gave himself, YHWH (Gen. 2:4),[45] he shows himself to be the maker of covenants and the rescuer of his people. These are relational attributes, and it makes sense because God is a relational God. Right from Genesis 1:26–28[46] the Bible portrays God as a king who, instead of erecting statues of himself, as kings in the Near East were known to do, created image bearers—living, breathing humans to serve as stewards of his creation.[47]

Humanity has a special place in God's creation. In the biblical narrative, human beings are divinely created to bear the ***imago Dei***, the well-known Latin term for "image of God." As opposed to pagan creation stories in which only the supreme ruler bears God's image, there is in Scripture a sense in which *all* human beings bear God's image.[48] And the very nature of God's plan for human beings was, according to the biblical text, "*very good*." In Hebrew, the phrase is ***tob meod*** (pronounced "tōve MAY-odd"), which refers to something so exceedingly, abundantly, and immeasurably good that happiness is the natural result.[49]

Tob Meod: **a Hebrew phrase translated as "very good"; the very best thing possible; the ultimate superlative of good.**

Your *being*, who you are as an image bearer of God, precedes any action you may take. We call people human *beings*, not human *doings*, for a reason. That humans specially bear God's image and aren't mere playthings for the gods is the single biggest distinguishing characteristic between the Judeo-Christian conception of humanity and all others. According to this view, human beings are actually distinct and inherently valuable persons regardless of size, level of development, environment, or degree of dependency.[50] They have a definable *essence*.[51]

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So what does this have to do with caring? It's simple. Each and every person bears God's image. If God cares enough about people to impart his image to them, how could we justify caring any less? Unfortunately, we humans often abuse the image of God by inviting others to worship *us* rather than the Creator. As Dave Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons write in *UnChristian*, this is a major problem for the rising generation:

> By a wide margin, [according to a Pew survey,] the top life priorities of eighteen- to twenty-five-year-olds are wealth and personal fame. Objectives like helping people who are in need, being a leader in the community, or becoming more spiritual have much less traction among young Americans than they do among older adults.[52]

Luton First, sponsor of Britain's National Kids' Day, corroborated these findings in a survey that asked British schoolchildren under age ten, "What do you think is the very best thing in the world?" The number one reply was "Being a Celebrity," followed by "Good Looks" and "Being Rich." "God" was the tenth—and last—response on the list.[53]

***Narcissism:* the love of or obsession with oneself; selfishness; self-centeredness.**

The term for this obsessive self-focus is **narcissism**, which is derived from a Greek myth about a boy who fell in love with his own reflection. In their book *The Narcissism Epidemic*, Jean Twenge and Keith Campbell lay the blame at the feet of endlessly repeated mantras, such as "You are special," and ask whether this blatant promotion of self-love has the potential to become pandemic among young adults.[54]

Narcissism is a personal problem that morphs into a cultural problem that Twenge and Campbell say leads to vanity, materialism, uniqueness [that we are better than others], antisocial behavior, relationship troubles, entitlement, and self-centered religion and volunteering.[55] The last item on this list, religion and volunteering, should shake us up. Even good things become bad when the goal is boosting self-admiration.[56] When we fail to bear God's image, or bear it badly, even our good deeds can contribute to the overall level of evil. As Isaiah 64:6 states, "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

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God Cares That We Love Our Neighbors

The first two things God cares about—his glory and his image—lead to the third thing he cares about: that we love our neighbors. Scripture says we're to love our neighbors *to the glory of God*. We read in Romans 15:7 that we should "welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." The word *welcome* in Greek is *proslambanō*, which implies inviting someone into the life of something. In other words, God is glorified when we personally care for those around us. Scripture reminds us that our ability to serve in this way comes only through God's power and only so that Christ may be glorified (1 Pet. 4:10–11).[57]

God is glorified when we personally care for those around us.

That God is glorified when we care for those around us is no minor point in Scripture. In fact, it's a central feature of God's plan. In the Old Testament, Leviticus 19 is just one passage that speaks of how we should love our neighbors *because of who God is*:

> When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.
>
> You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.
>
> You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired worker shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the LORD.
>
> You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. (vv. 9–15)

Notice the motivation God gave the people: *I am the Lord your God.* It's because God is glorious that the Israelites were to serve, and this service applied to everything from agriculture to business contracts to dealing with employees to poverty care to legal matters.

Loving our neighbors is the clear, unequivocal response to the reality that they are image bearers of God. In Matthew 22, Jesus was asked about the great commandment in the Law of Moses. He replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (vv. 37–40). Our love for God will be evident by how richly and fully we love our neighbors.

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This is a whole Bible truth. The apostle Paul reiterated many key Old Testament commands and makes it clear that obedience to them is part of the way we are to proclaim the gospel. From our economic structures to our personal conduct, Scripture clearly ties everything we do back to glorifying God, bearing God's image, and loving our neighbors.

Consider, for example, Romans 13:

> Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.
>
> Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. (vv. 8–14)

If redeemed people don't care for others by loving them as neighbors, who will? The Christian writer C. S. Lewis believed that the humility of serving our neighbors is part of displaying God's glory: "The load, or weight, or burden of my neighbour's glory should be laid on my back, a load so heavy that only humility can carry it, and the backs of the proud will be broken."[58] Lewis went on to say that

> the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you now meet, if at all, only in a nightmare. All day long we are, in some degree, helping each other to one or the other of these destinations.… Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses.[59]

***Shalom:* from the Hebrew for "peace, prosperity, and wellness"; a concept that implies harmony in creation and with one's neighbors as well as a right relationship with God.**

Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the connection between our neighbors' well-being and our love for God through the concept of ***shalom***—peace, wellness, prosperity, tranquillity, and contentment. At the very heart of *shalom* is neighborliness: We should wish *shalom* for others as well as ourselves. In fact, God told the Israelites in captivity that their *shalom* would be secured as they worked to secure *shalom* for those around them, even their captors (Jer. 29:7).[60]

But seeking the good of our neighbors, which is contrary to our sin nature, must involve repentance, redemption, and renewal. If it doesn't, the good we do may end up *looking* like caring even though it is actually narcissism. We may have the best of intentions but end up doing more harm than good.

10. How We Ought to Care

Biblical caring focuses on attributes that Scripture itself admonishes us to pursue. We'll look at three of these attributes: wisdom, worthiness, and words.

Godly Caring Is Based on Wisdom

Wisdom is central to the Scripture's vision of human flourishing. However, many people find it theologically baffling because wisdom seems to have more to do with what we might call *common grace*—the grace of God that is available to all people so that they might live well in God's creation—than with *saving grace*, the grace available to the redeemed. It's possible for a person to be wise in a particular area, such as developing an artistic ability, and foolish in rejecting God. Scripture's Wisdom Literature—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon—reveals four distinct meanings of wisdom:

Wisdom is central to the Scripture's vision of human flourishing.

- Skill in a craft; technical expertise (e.g., metal worker, skilled warriors, sailors, farmers, priests, scribes, judges, counselors)
- Intelligence; shrewdness, such as the academic wisdom of Solomon (1 Kings 4:29);[61] and the scheming or cunning of Pharaoh (Exod. 1:10)[62] or David (1 Kings 2:6, 9)[63]
- Good sense; moral understanding—the ability to apply knowledge prudently to life
- Understanding the fundamental issues of life—this top level recognizes that the essence of wisdom is theological ("the fear of the Lord")

In outlining how to live well, the Wisdom Literature is guided by four assumptions:

- The universe is ordered, and life proceeds according to a fixed order.
- This order is teachable and learnable.
- By learning the order in the universe, the individual is handed an instrument with which to determine and navigate his or her way through life.
- The source and foundation of the order in the universe is God himself.

We should, according to the book of Proverbs, pursue a life of wisdom even though it costs everything we have (Prov. 4:7).[64] Normally, wisdom's rewards are straightforward. We reap what we sow. If we develop the right character and make right decisions, we'll be successful. If we cultivate poor character and make poor decisions, on the other hand, our lives will be a disaster.

Yes, as we see in Job and Ecclesiastes, things don't always work out as expected. We're affected by the presence of evil, by our own limitations, and by the poor decisions others make. But the Bible still encourages us to live according to the principles of wisdom and encourage others to do so as well.

Normally, wisdom's rewards are straightforward. We reap what we sow.

Godly Caring Is Based on Worthiness

Scripture focuses on what it means to live a worthy life. The apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 1:27, "Only let your manner of life be *worthy* of the gospel of Christ." He went on to say, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything *worthy* of praise, think about these things" (4:8).

The word *worthy* in Greek is *axios*, which means "to be recognized as fitting." It's the root word of the English word *axis*, as in the axis on which the world turns.[65] A worthy life is based on such virtues as prudence, charity, hope, and faith, around which the world of humanity turns.[66]

The biblical approach to virtue is very different from the self-help psychologies that focus on *our* happiness, *our* health, and *our* spiritual awareness rather than on how we can live to glorify God by loving our neighbors.

From a biblical view, there is a relationship between an individual's mental outlook and his or her belief about God, Christ, salvation, and eternal life. When we focus on core virtues that are truly worthy, our souls, spirits, hearts, and minds grow. Self-centeredness, on the other hand, shrinks us.

A virtuous person will literally lead out of the overflow of a worthy life.

Christians explain that a virtuous life is possible because God, through Christ, forgives our sins, heals our sinful human nature, and replaces our guilty consciences with the fruit of his Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, and it is always outward focused. A virtuous person will literally lead out of the overflow of a worthy life.

Godly Caring Is Based on Words

Twenty miles into my first marathon, I hit a wall. With only 6.2 miles to go, I suddenly felt as if I might topple over. Along that last part of the route, however, volunteers stood cheering, holding signs, and offering words of encouragement. By the time I hit the home stretch, I was so energized that I sprinted to the finish. It might not have looked like I was running very fast, but I felt as if I were flying. The cheering of the crowd breathed life into me at just the right moment.

Words can bring life. Proverbs 18:21 says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." Well-spoken words of encouragement enrich us. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver," as Proverbs 25:11 observes. You can probably recall a specific time in which someone gave you a blessing, even if it was as simple as "Good job! Keep going!" Words can also bring death. I once conducted a study of grown-ups who related stories of teachers who'd had a bad influence on them. Stunningly, the people in my study—many of whom had been out of school for thirty or forty years—could remember *word for word* nasty things the bad teachers had said, words that in effect became a curse on their lives.

We owe it to our fellow citizens to speak the truth as we understand it. To not do so is to violate at least three scriptural principles:

1. "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it" (Prov. 3:27).

2. "Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Behold, we did not know this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?" (24:11–12).

3. "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute" (31:8).

As we speak the way God designed us to speak, we bear his image well. And when we do that, we can live with wisdom and show ourselves to be worthy in a way that blesses other people. It enables us to be like members of the ancient Israelite tribe of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32).[67] Because they had understanding and used words wisely, they were apparently seen as leaders in the nation.

Words are important to the gospel, which is a spoken message. The apostle John even called Jesus "the Word" (John 1:1).[68] And much attention is devoted throughout the New Testament to living and speaking in a way worthy of him. Ed Stetzer put a spin on an old adage attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel, and *since it's necessary*, use words."[69] As we live wisely, walk worthily, and speak words of life, we prepare the ground in which the seeds of the gospel can grow. Caring, then, is at the very heart of what it means to live the Christian life.

11. What You'll Learn in This Book

It's a daunting task to apply a biblical worldview to the issues of our culture. We'll almost certainly have our disagreements—both theological and political—along the way. But our task isn't to come up with point-by-point policy prescriptions for today's ills. It is to develop a method of applying our faith to the culture.

As we live wisely, walk worthily, and speak words of life, we prepare the ground in which the seeds of the gospel can grow.

This said, here's a little overview of what we'll focus on in this volume:

- What culture is, how it's fashioned, and how Christians in the past have shaped culture.
- How to become a shaper of culture who thinks and speaks clearly and logically.
- What biblical principles look like when applied to tough issues, such as technology; the arts and entertainment; abortion; euthanasia; bioethics; sexuality (including pornography and same-sex attraction, marriage, politics, creation care, poverty care, tolerance, persecution, religious liberty, justice, the use of force, and community renewal).

Whew. That's quite a list. Along the way it may seem overwhelming. Even as I write I sometimes feel that there are too many issues with too many angles for me to effectively care about. That's why I'm trying to keep my eye firmly on the baseline of *shalom*, because, as we saw earlier, *shalom* means pursuing the peace, tranquillity, and prosperity of our communities. *Shalom* is the connection between the way we bear God's image and the way we care for our neighbors' well-being.

This doesn't mean that all of our neighbors will be grateful. It's very likely that Christians alive today—no matter where they are in the world—will be mocked, denied rights and freedoms, and even physically persecuted for their beliefs. "In the world you will have tribulation,"

Jesus said (John 16:33).[70] God calls us to stand for truth and fight against evil and injustice. Our central question is not "Could I be harmed by this belief or action?" but "How can I pursue *shalom* so people can live in prosperous harmony with one another in a way that glorifies God?" Even if we go to our graves feeling that all our efforts have been in vain, we aren't to worry, because we have this encouragement from Jesus: "Take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

12. Givers, Not Takers

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, we humans base our lives on what we believe to be true. If we believe the Bible, we ought to find ourselves increasingly becoming givers, not takers. In my book *Handoff*, I told an old story of a man who visited a farmer friend. As the men sat on the porch rocking back and forth, two of the farmer's dogs got into a fight. Startled, the visitor asked, "Aren't you going to stop them?"

"Nah, they'll stop soon enough. They fight all the time."

"Which one wins?" asked the visitor.

"Whichever one I feed the most," the farmer replied.[71]

With every action, we either feed or starve the two competing sides of our nature, the giver side or the taker side. Those who feed the "taker" ultimately live miserable lives. They don't build anything of enduring value, they don't leave others better off, and they don't rescue the perishing. Those who cultivate the "giver," on the other hand, learn to build and deposit and grow. They gain favor with God and man. When difficulty chips away at them, it only reveals a deeper beauty. When it comes to facing difficult issues, takers wilt quickly and slink away; givers take on challenges willingly. Takers tolerate people; givers shape them. Takers grow needier; givers become more generous. Takers fill their houses with junk; givers fill their lives with memories.

With every action, we either feed or starve the two competing sides of our nature, the giver side or the taker side. Takers grow needier; givers become more generous.

You and I develop into givers or takers through the endless choices we make every day. Of course, we can't solve every problem in the world or we'll get burned out. But the solution to burnout is not to back away; it is to engage biblically. Author Parker Palmer says that burnout "results from trying to give what I do not possess.… It does not result from giving all I have: it merely reveals the nothingness from which I was trying to give in the first place."[72] Only when we have a clear sense of who God is and what he thinks can we truly care about others.

Only when we have a clear sense of who God is and what he thinks can we truly care about others.

So let's get to it. As C. S. Lewis said in his famous sermon "The Weight of Glory," "The cross comes before the crown and tomorrow is a Monday morning. A cleft has opened in the pitiless walls of the world, and we are invited to follow our great Captain inside."[73] Let's open the door and go on in, first by discussing what culture actually is, how it's created, and how Christians in the past have shaped it.

Endnotes

1. Thanks to Dennis Prager for this brilliant example from a debate—"Can We Be Good without God?"—with atheist professor Jonathan Glover at Oxford University, March 3, 1993. Prager asked, "If you, Professor Glover, were stranded at the midnight hour in a desolate Los Angeles street and if, as you stepped out of your car with fear and trembling, you were suddenly to hear the weight of pounding footsteps behind you, and you saw ten burly, young men who had just stepped out of a dwelling coming toward you, would it or would it not make a difference to you to know that they were coming from a Bible study?" Of this exchange, Ravi Zacharias said, "Amidst hilarious laughter in the auditorium, Glover conceded that it would make a difference." See Ravi Zacharias, *The Real Face of Atheism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004), 135–36.
2. Jim Clifton, *The Coming Jobs War* (New York: Gallup Press, 2011), 46.
3. Johannes Gutenberg, quoted in Alphones de Lamartine, *Memoirs of Celebrated Characters*, 2nd ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 308.
4. Johannes Gutenberg, quoted in Lamartine, *Memoirs of Celebrated Characters*, 319–20.
5. Agnes H. Gottlieb and Henry Gottlieb, *1,000 Years, 1,000 People: Ranking the Men and Women Who Shaped the Millennium* (New York: Kodansha, 1998), 2.
6. Michio Kaku, "What Happens When Computers Stop Shrinking?," Salon.com, March 19, 2011, www.salon.com/2011/03/19/moores_law_ends_excerpt/.
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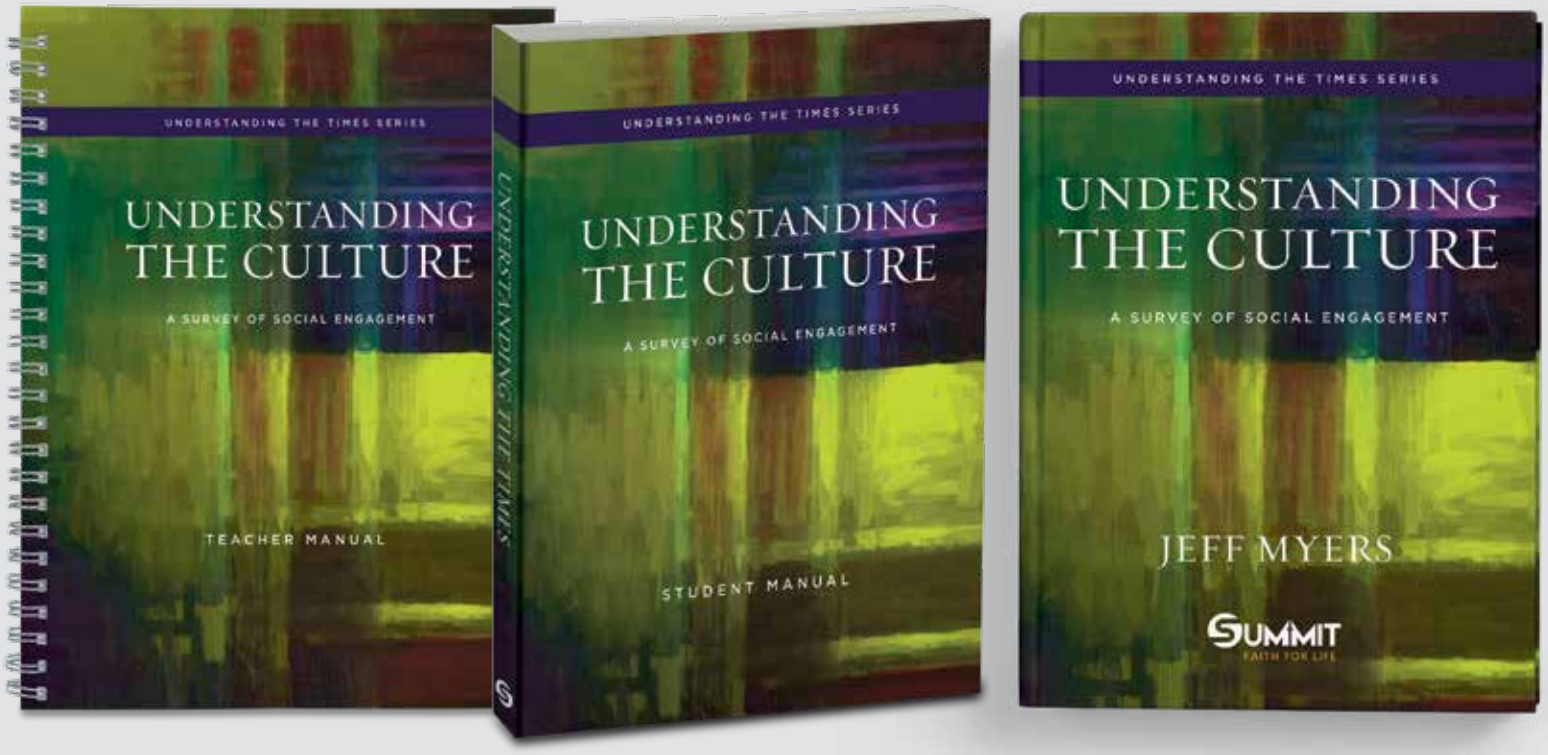

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